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DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

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Modi is now India's 2nd longest-serving PM

NEW DELHI, 25 JULY

On 25 July, 2025, Prime Minister Narendra Modi became India's second longest-serving PM in a continuous term, surpassing Indira Gandhi's 4,077-day tenure. Modi has now completed 4,078 days in office since taking charge in 2014. Only Jawaharlal Nehru served longer, with an uninterrupted 6,130 days. Modi, India's first post-Independence born PM, is also the longest-serving non-Congress leader and the only one to complete two full terms in that category. Including his stint as Gujarat Chief Minister from 2001 to 2014, he holds the longest elected leadership tenure in India, having led his party to six consecutive election victories.—*PTI*

PM gives ₹4,850 cr credit to Maldives

India eyes better trade, defence ties with Male

MALE, 25 JULY

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday announced a Rs 4,850 crore line of credit and launched free trade agreement talks with the Maldives, signalling a reset in bilateral ties that had seen strains under President Mohamed Muizzu's administration.

After wide-ranging discussions with President Muizzu in Male, Modi said India is proud to be the Maldives' "most trusted friend" and reaffirmed cooperation in trade, defence, and infrastructure. The leaders also agreed to work towards finalising a bilateral investment treaty.

This is Modi's first visit to the Maldives under Muizzu's presidency and marks the first foreign leader visit since Muizzu took office in 2023, pledging to shift away from the Maldives' traditional "India First" policy and strengthening ties with China.

Modi's visit, including a ceremonial welcome at Republic Square, followed a warm reception at Velena International Airport, where Muizzu personally greeted him.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Maldivian President Mohamed Muizzu during a meeting at the President's Office in Male **PHOTO: PTI**

The Maldives holds strategic importance in India's "Neighbourhood First" and MAHASAGAR visions. Modi emphasised India's commitment to supporting the Maldives in enhancing its defence capabilities, highlighting mutual trust in security cooperation.

Bilateral ties had soured after Muizzu's "India Out" campaign and his immediate demand post-oath for Indian military withdrawal. India subsequently replaced its personnel with civilians. The original deployment supported humanitarian and rescue missions via Indian helicopters and aircraft.

India's sustained diplomatic outreach and economic assistance are believed to have helped repair ties. —*PTI*

DRONE LAUNCHES MISSILES

PHOTO: PTI

DRDO on Friday test-fired a drone-launched precision guided missile in Andhra. The UAV-Launched Precision Guided Missile (ULPGM)-V3 can engage a wide range of targets in both plain and high-altitude terrain. It has day-and-night operational capability

Indian issues travel advisory for Thailand

BANGKOK, 25 JULY

The Indian embassy in Thailand on Friday issued an advisory for its nationals in the country, urging them to avoid travelling to seven provinces amid ongoing unrest along the Thailand-Cambodia border. Clashes erupted between Thailand and Cambodia along the border between their countries on Thursday, killing at least 11 people and injuring several others, according to the state-run Thai Public Broadcasting Service. Attaching a post by the Tourism Authority of Thailand, it said that the places mentioned "are not recommended" for travelling. The tourism authority said that "several attractions" in Ubon Ratchathani, Surin, Sisaket, Buriram, Sa Kaeo, Chanthaburi and Trat provinces are not recommended for visiting.—*PTI*

FAA gives clean chit to Boeing's fuel switch

OSHKOSH, 25 JULY

The fatal crash of an Air India Boeing 787 jet last month, which killed 241 of 242 people on board and 19 on the ground, does not appear to have been caused by a mechanical failure, according to the head of the US Federal Aviation Administration (FAA).

FAA Administrator Bryan Bedford said on Thursday that investigators have found no evidence of faults in the Boeing 787's fuel control unit or accidental activation of its switches. "We can say with a high level of confidence it doesn't appear to be a mechanical issue with the Boeing fuel control unit," Bedford said at an air show in Wisconsin.

He confirmed FAA inspectors had removed and tested the units and physically inspected aircraft. "We feel very comfortable that this isn't an issue with inadvertent manipulation of fuel control," he added. —*Agencies*

GENOCIDE NOBODY CARES ABOUT

A viral photo shows a malnourished 1.5-year-old, Muhammad Zakariya Ayyoub al-Matouq, his ribs and spine protruding, sucking on an empty bottle. The child's weight has dropped from 9 to 6kg. Israel's blockade have pushed Gaza's humanitarian crisis to a breaking point, with starvation claiming lives **PHOTO: AHMED AL ARINI** >>>MORE ON PAGE 6

'It was my mistake': Rahul on Cong's caste census delay

NEW DELHI, 25 JULY

Congress leader and Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi on Friday admitted it was his personal mistake, not Congress party's, that a caste census was not conducted earlier. Speaking at the 'Bhagidari Nyay Sammelan' of OBCs at Talkatora Stadium, he said he is now committed to correcting that.

"In my 21 years of political life, I've done good work on land acquisition, MGNREGA, the food bill, and tribal rights. But I failed to protect OBC interests as I should have. That is my mistake," Gandhi said.

He admitted that he did not deeply understand the issues of the OBC community 10–15 years ago. "I understood Dalit and tribal issues clearly. But OBC issues are often hidden. Had I known more, I would have pushed for the caste census sooner," he said.

Highlighting Telangana's caste census, Gandhi called it a "political earthquake" with nationwide aftershocks. "We will now conduct a full caste census—an X-ray of the population—in all Congress-ruled states," he declared, calling it essential for justice and representation. —*PTI*

LS to take up motion to remove Justice Varma

NEW DELHI, 25 JULY

A motion to remove Justice Yashwant Varma, entangled in a suspected corruption case, will be taken up in the Lok Sabha after a similar Opposition-backed motion in the Rajya Sabha was not admitted, official sources said.

The Rajya Sabha had received a notice signed by 63 Opposition MPs on 21 July, the same day a bipartisan motion was submitted in the Lok Sabha with 152 signatures from both ruling and Opposition members. Then Rajya Sabha Chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar acknowledged the motion in the House but resigned abruptly the same night, triggering speculation about the notice's fate. Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju confirmed that all political parties had agreed to act jointly. "Proceedings will begin in the Lok Sabha," he said, adding the motion will move to the Rajya Sabha. —*PTI*

Centre set to extend President's rule in Manipur for another 6 months

AFTER COMPLAINTS

Govt bans 25 OTT apps over soft-porn content

NEW DELHI, 25 JULY

The government has ordered the blocking of 25 over-the-top (OTT) apps and websites, including popular platforms such as ULLU, ALTT, and Desiflix, for publishing obscene, vulgar, and in some cases, pornographic content.

The Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, in consultation with the Ministries of Home, Women and Child Development, Electronics and IT, and Law, along with industry bodies FICCI and CII, and child rights experts, issued the blocking orders under the Information Technology Act, 2000, and IT Rules, 2021.

PHOTO: FREEPIK

The banned platforms include Big Shots App, Boomex, Navarasa Lite, Gulab App, Kangan App, Bull App, Jalva App, ShowHit, Wow Entertainment, Look Entertainment, Hitprime, Feneo, ShowX, Sol Talkies, Adda TV, HotX VIP, Hulchul App, MoodX, NeonX VIP, Fugi, Mojflix, and Triflicks.

Officials said the content often featured sexually explicit scenes without storyline, theme, or social message, and included sexual innuendos.

The action follows numerous complaints from the public and the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR). In May, ULLU removed its web series 'House Arrest' following a government directive.

Despite prior warnings issued in September 2024, the platforms continued violations, with some resuming obscene content via new domains after earlier bans in March. —*PTI*

4 killed in head-on collision with lorry in Kodagu

KODAGU, 25 JULY

Four people were killed in a road accident after the car they were travelling in collided head-on with a lorry in Kodagu district on Friday afternoon. The deceased are Nihad, Riswan, Rashib, and Rishu — all residents of Market Road in Gonikoppalu, Madikeri taluk. According to police, two of them died on the spot, while the other two succumbed to their injuries at a government hospital.

The accident occurred around 3.30 p.m. near Koyinadu, close to Devarakop, on the Mani-Mysuru National Highway. Both vehicles were reportedly travelling at high speed, which led to the fatal impact.

Madikeri police have registered a case and are investigating the incident. *—Salar News*

Gold smuggling bid foiled at Bengaluru airport

BENGALURU, 25 JULY

Customs officials at Kempegowda International Airport in the City successfully thwarted an attempt to smuggle gold on Friday. A passenger arriving from Dubai allegedly concealed 3.5kg of gold biscuits inside a co-passenger's luggage trolley to evade Customs checks. The unwitting passenger discovered the bag in his trolley and promptly alerted airport security. Following this, Customs officials seized the gold, which is estimated to be worth several crores of rupees. Preliminary investigations suggest that the gold was abandoned by a passenger from the Dubai flight. *—PTI*

Schools shut across coastal, Malnad districts amid rains

UTTARA KANNADA, 25 JULY

Due to continuous heavy rains, educational institutions up to Grade 12 (II PUC) in coastal and Malnad regions of Karnataka have declared a holiday on Saturday and Sunday, prioritising student safety. Districts including Uttara Kannada, Dakshina Kannada, Udupi, Kodagu, and Chikkamagaluru — along with parts of Shivamogga — have witnessed almost week-long closures of schools and colleges due to relentless downpours. In Uttara Kannada, which includes dense forests and coastal zones, Deputy Commissioner Meena Nagaraj announced the closure following IMD warnings of continued heavy rainfall and potential landslides through to 29 July.

Institutions in Udupi, Dakshina Kannada, Kodagu, and Chikkaballapur have also extended closures in response to worsening weather conditions.

Authorities have urged residents in the Malnad region — including Uttara Kannada, Kodagu, Chikkamagaluru, and Shivamogga — to stay away from hilly terrain and riverbanks due to landslide and flood risks.. *—Salar News*

BLOWN BY STORM

A huge tree lies uprooted at Vidhana Soudha due to strong monsoon winds, as school students visit the landmark during a weekend tour in Bengaluru on Friday **PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD**

CM, DKS fly to Delhi, renew leadership change buzz

Sources suggest they may meet Rahul after attending AICC meet

BENGALURU, 25 JULY

Uncertainty continues to swirl around Chief Minister Siddaramaiah's prospects of completing his full five-year term, as he, alongside Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar, visits Delhi again, his third trip since June. Political speculation in Karnataka intensifies, despite the Congress high command's silence and a gag order on public statements.

Siddaramaiah, currently in his second stint as Chief Minister, is on the brink of creating history by surpassing Devaraj Urs' record of over 2,700 days in office. If he continues until January 2026, he will become the State's longest-serving elected chief minister. However, questions persist over a possible leadership change, as a purported rotational formula with Shivakumar looms large, though never officially confirmed.

The leaders are in Delhi ostensibly to attend the AICC Backward Class unit's "Bhagidari Nyay Sammelan" on Friday. However, party insiders suggest they may also meet Rahul Gandhi—a meeting that failed to materialise during their last trip in early July.

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah with Deputy CM DK Shivakumar meet with AICC General Secretary Randeep Singh Surjewala in New Delhi on Friday **PHOTO: PTI**

While public remarks from MLAs have ceased following the leadership's diktat, internal manoeuvring continues as the government nears its two-and-a-half-year mark this November.

The Congress appears to be delaying any leadership decisions until after the Bihar elections, where OBC votes are pivotal.

Siddaramaiah is the only OBC chief minister in the Congress currently, and removing him may impact the party's pro-OBC narrative. His strong AHINDA support base and the confidence of most legislators add to his political weight. The party recently appointed him to lead the AICC OBC advisory council.

Meanwhile, Shivakumar, seen as a loyalist of the Gandhi family and instrumental in consolidating Vokkaliga support in the Old Mysuru region, has maintained strategic silence. Known for his religious inclinations and careful political moves, he remains a strong contender.

With Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge deflecting questions on the issue, Siddaramaiah's recent assertions about completing his term are viewed as a preemptive move against possible high command decisions. *—PTI*

'LOST MENTAL BALANCE'

DKS' remarks reflect Congress culture: Sawant

PANAJI, 25 JULY

Goa Chief Minister Pramod Sawant on Friday responded to the "lost mental balance" jibe of Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar, saying the remarks reflected his Congress culture.

In a harsh remark, Shivakumar on Thursday claimed that Sawant had "lost his mental balance" and said Karnataka would proceed with the Mahadayi river project, an emotive issue in neighbouring Goa. He claimed that Sawant was not aware of the federal structure.

Shivakumar's comments came after Sawant told the assembly earlier that Goa would move the Supreme Court against Karnataka for continuing work on the project on the river, pronounced as 'Mhadei' in Goa, despite the matter being heard by the apex court.

Talking to reporters in Panaji on Friday, Sawant said, "We have been pursuing our demand to save Mhadei from being diverted, before the Supreme Court and the Centre."

"He (Shivakumar) is showing the Congress culture. We are serious about the issue. We will continue our communication with the centre," he said.

Pramod Sawan **PHOTO: PTI**

"When someone is frustrated, they utter such words," he said, adding that Congress leaders in Karnataka are competing amongst themselves on how low they can stoop.

Goa has been opposing Karnataka's Kalasa-Banduri projects in the Mahadayi river basin.

The Kalasa-Banduri project by the Karnataka government proposes diverting Mahadayi river water into the Malaprabha river to enhance the drinking water supply in parts of Dharwad, Belagavi, Bagalkote, and Gadag districts.

Mahadayi flows through Karnataka and Goa before joining the Arabian Sea. It is known as the Mandovi in Goa. *—PTI*

'CM must apologise for attacking EC'

BENGALURU/NEW DELHI, 25 JULY

A political war of words erupted on Friday as BJP State President BY Vijayendra lashed out at the Congress, demanding apologies from Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and Deputy Chief Minister D. Shivakumar for questioning the integrity of the Election Commission of India (ECI).

Addressing a press conference, Vijayendra said, "Rahul Gandhi has accused the BJP of misusing the ECI during the last Lok Sabha elections. Now, Siddaramaiah and Shivakumar are echoing these baseless claims. It is anti-democratic to cast aspersions on a constitutional body."

He questioned the logic behind Congress' accusations, asking, "If the ECI was truly biased, how did the Congress win 134 seats in the 2023 Assembly elections? Didn't they also win three bypolls recently?" Calling the remarks a "dangerous development," he claimed the Congress still harboured an "Emergency-era mindset."

BY Vijayendra **PHOTO: PTI**

60,000 votes discrepancy in Mahadevapura

Meanwhile, in New Delhi, Shivakumar backed Rahul's allegations. "The ECI has turned a deaf ear to our questions," he said, adding that further proof would be provided.

Shivakumar cited irregularities in booth-level data, particularly in Bengaluru's Mahadevapura constituency, where a legal team found a 60,000-vote discrepancy. "It's not about wins or losses. It's about transparency," he said.

He further alleged vote fraud in the Bengaluru Rural constituency, where the expected margin was 7,000–8,000 votes but ended at over 1 lakh. *—PTI*

10 Mandya students hospitalised due to food poisoning

MANDYA, 25 JULY

In a suspected case of food poisoning, ten students from a residential school were admitted to hospital after experiencing severe stomach pain and other distressing symptoms at KM Doddi, within the Maddur taluk of Mandya district in the State, on Friday morning.

The students began to complain of vomiting and abdominal pain after consuming food provided by the school. Fortunately, all individuals are currently receiving treatment and are reported to be in stable condition.

A police official stated, "We have not yet received any formal complaints regarding the incident; however, considering the seriousness of the situation, a decision on the next steps will be made." This incident follows closely on the heels of another suspected food poisoning case in Raichur district on Monday night, which tragically resulted in the deaths of three family members, while two others required hospitalisation. *—PTI*

WHERE WILL THEY GO?

BBMP workers carry out an encroachment clearance drive against street vendors near NIMHANS Hospital in Bengaluru on Friday **PHOTO: SALAR**

BJP welcomes 'Veeragallu' statue at City statue

BENGALURU, 25 JULY

Senior BJP leader Rajeev Chandrasekhar has expressed his enthusiasm over the unveiling of a 75-foot Veeragallu (hero stone) at the National Military Memorial in Bengaluru, scheduled for 26 July. The monolith, weighing 700 tonnes, will be inaugurated to commemorate the 26th anniversary of Kargil Vijay Diwas, marking the completion of a long-delayed project.

Chandrasekhar, a former Union Minister, stated, "This journey began 16 years ago, overcoming numerous challenges and opposition from some insensitive individuals. Today, this memorial serves as Karnataka and Bengaluru's tribute to the valour and sacrifice of our armed forces, as well as the pain endured by their families." *—PTI*

Madigas to protest against govt delay in internal quota

MYSURU, 25 JULY

Senior Advocate R Arunkumar, head of the Midaiga Meesalathi Horata Samithi, has labelled the Congress-led State government as the "number one enemy of the Madiga community" for its refusal to provide internal reservations. During a press conference on Friday, he accused the State's Social Welfare Minister, Mahadevappa, of being anti-Madiga for opposing these reservations. Arunkumar pointed out that the Supreme Court had previously supported the provision of internal reservations for Madigas in a landmark ruling on 1 August last year; however, the government has yet to act on this directive.

The advocate expressed concerns about Justice Nagmohan Das's internal reservation commission, which has delayed submitting its caste census findings and reports to the state government. The Madigas is planning a significant statewide protest on 1 August if the state government fails to accept the report. *—Salar News*

CLOSE TO M'LURU PORT

Karikad in Mangaluru to get multimodal logistics park

Officials said land acquisition and project design will begin soon **PHOTO: PTI**

MANGALURU, 25 JULY

As part of its ambitious Industrial Policy 2025-30, the government has identified Karikad near Mangaluru as a key location for developing a world-class multimodal logistics park to facilitate freight movement and industrial growth, officials said on Friday.

S Selvakumar, Additional Chief Secretary, Commerce and Industries Department, said that Karikad's strategic proximity to the Mangaluru Port, railway infrastructure, and national highways makes it an ideal site.

"The park will serve as a crucial node in the state's logistics corridor, connecting coastal Karnataka with the hinterland," he noted.

- The park is also expected to create employment opportunities.

Speaking at the CII Mangaluru Infrastructure and Logistics Summit here, Selvakumar said the proposed park is expected to ease freight transport, reduce turnaround time for goods movement, and provide dedicated infrastructure to support Karnataka's growing manufacturing and export sectors.

Selvakumar visited the site along with senior officials from the Karnataka Industrial Area Development Board (KIADB), New Mangalore Port Authority, and other departments to assess feasibility.

According to officials, the government is working closely with various stakeholders to ensure the development aligns with global logistics standards and environmental norms.

The park is also expected to create employment opportunities and attract private investment in the warehousing and logistics sectors. The project falls under the Centre's PM Gati Shakti scheme and is aimed at improving overall supply chain efficiency.

Senior officials said land acquisition and project design will begin soon, and the government plans to expedite clearances to enable early implementation. *—PTI*

SIT begins Dharmasthala probe from Belthangady

MANGALURU, 25 JULY

The SIT, constituted by the State government to probe alleged criminal activities under the jurisdiction of Dharmasthala police station, has begun its operations from Belthangady, officials in the know said on Friday.

The SIT was formed following a complaint submitted to the state DGP by a resident of Dharmasthala town, alleging serious offences including illegal detention, custodial torture, extortion, and property-related irregularities involving certain police personnel and others.

To ensure the complainant's safety and smooth investigation, the team has been stationed in Belthangady instead of Dharmasthala. According to sources, the SIT has already initiated formal proceedings, gathering preliminary information related to the charges and plans to record statements soon.

The complainant, who claims to have been a victim of illegal confinement and financial coercion, has sought protection for his family and an impartial inquiry, alleging collusion between some police officials and local influential persons. Sources said that SIT officers are maintaining strict confidentiality. *—PTI*

PHOTO: ANI

'Anti-Bengali' bias in MGNREGS: TMC slams Centre

NEW DELHI, 25 JULY

The Trinamool Congress (TMC) on Friday accused the Centre of being "anti-Bengal" after West Bengal was excluded from a Rajya Sabha reply on pending MGNREGA payments. TMC MP Derek O'Brien had asked about state-wise dues and a rise in registered households under the scheme. However, Rural Development Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan omitted West Bengal from the data provided. TMC MP Ritabrata Banerjee called the exclusion "ridiculous" and claimed it reflected a "Bangla-virodhi" mindset. The Centre has withheld MGNREGA funds for West Bengal since March 2022 over alleged non-compliance. Congress leader Jairam Ramesh also criticised the omission, calling it "unprecedented" for Parliament to ignore one state in such a manner.*—PTI*

Covid vaccine had no effect on heart attack risks: Govt

NEW DELHI, 25 JULY

Tamil Nadu Deputy Chief Minister Udhayanidhi Stalin has accused the AIADMK of secretly aligning with the BJP to help the saffron party gain ground in the state. Addressing DMK booth agents, he called the 2026 Assembly election a battle to protect Tamil pride, land, and language. He claimed Tamil Nadu received no Central education funds last year, while BJP-ruled states got thousands of crores. Udhayanidhi reassured supporters that Chief Minister MK Stalin is recovering and still managing state affairs. He praised the DMK's welfare schemes and noted a 9.69 per cent economic growth rate. *—ANI*

Rahul Gandhi gets relief in Savarkar case

NEW DELHI, 25 JULY

India's Supreme Court on Friday extended the stay on criminal proceedings against senior Congress leader Rahul Gandhi over remarks he made about Vinayak Damodar Savarkar during the Bharat Jodo Yatra in Maharashtra in November 2022. The Uttar Pradesh government, opposing Gandhi's plea for stay, supported complainant advocate Nripendra Pandey's claim that Gandhi's comments aimed to incite hatred and social division. The court allowed Pandey to file a response and gave Gandhi two weeks to submit a rejoinder. Earlier, on 25 April, the bench criticised Gandhi for his "irresponsible" remarks, stating, "Let's not mock our freedom fighters."*—PTI*

Soldier dead in mine blast along LoC in Poonch

CHENNAI, 25 JULY

An Indian Army soldier was killed and two others injured in a landmine blast along the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir's Poonch district on Friday. The explosion occurred during an area domination patrol in the Krishna Ghati sector. The fallen soldier, Agniveer Lalit Kumar of the 7 JAT Regiment, died at the scene, while a Junior Commissioned Officer and another soldier were injured and are in stable condition at a military hospital. The White Knight Corps paid tribute, stating they stand with Lalit Kumar's family in their hour of grief and honour his supreme sacrifice for the nation. *—ANI*

Oppn MPs tear 'SIR', dump it in bins

The Parliament is expected to discuss Operation Sindoor on Monday

NEW DELHI, 25 JULY

Amid repeated disruptions since the beginning of the Parliament's Monsoon Session, Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla on Friday convened a meeting of senior leaders of political parties.

According to parliamentary reports, it was decided in the meeting that the House will run smoothly from Monday, 28 July.

In the meeting, Birla reportedly told leaders that he wanted the House to have meaningful discussions and pushed for decorum during Question Hour.

Notably, Lok Sabha is expected to take up a discussion on 'Operation Sindoor' on Monday.

Meanwhile, it was business as usual for Opposition leaders in the Parliament.

Several MPs from the INDIA bloc, including Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge and Leader of Opposition, Rahul Gandhi, staged a symbolic protest in the Parliament House complex on Friday against the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of voter roll in Bihar.

Leader of Opposition in Rajya Sabha and Congress MP Mallikarjun Kharge tears a sign with SIR written on it and dumps it in a dustbin, during the Monsoon session of Parliament, in New Delhi, on Monday *PHOTO: PTI*

The demonstration involved tearing up posters marked 'SIR' and placing them in a disposal bin, representing their rejection of the initiative.

Kharge accused the Modi government of attempting to disenfranchise vulnerable groups, including the poor, Dalits, tribals, and minorities, in order to modify the Constitution in line with the Manusmriti.

He claimed that the Election Commission is complicit in this "vote bandi," further alleging that EC officials are favouring certain groups over others in form-filling processes.

The protest included a march featuring banners reading 'SIR- Loktantra Par Vaar'. Opposition MPs called for the withdrawal of SIR and demanded discussions in both houses of Parliament, chanting slogans such as "Save democracy" and "Stop vote-bandi".

Priyanka Gandhi also commented on the issue, defending the right to vote promised by the Constitution and warning that infringing on this right for the disadvantaged threatens democracy itself.

The opposition continues to voice concerns about SIR, alleging it serves to disenfranchise voters in Bihar ahead of the upcoming assembly elections. *—PTI*

President's rule in Manipur to be extended by 6 months

NEW DELHI, 25 JULY

The Centre is set to extend President's rule in Manipur for another six months from 13 August, and a notice for bringing a statutory resolution on it has been given to the Rajya Sabha, which has been admitted by the chair. The House is expected to take up the notice next week after discussion.

Meanwhile, the Manipur Police has constituted Special Task Forces (STFs) in all the districts to identify and take action against illegal immigrants residing in the northeastern state, officials said.

In addition, a comprehensive SOP for verification and detection of illegal immigrants, including Pakistani and Bangladeshi nationals, has been issued. *—PTI*

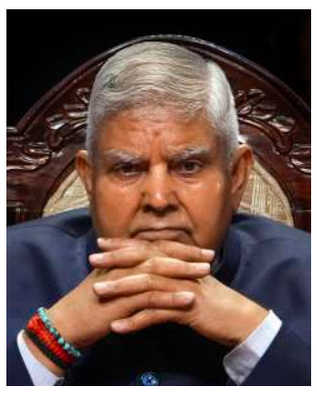
Will BJP's VP elect be a safe choice?

NEW DELHI, 25 JULY

The BJP-led alliance is set to start consultation for its pick for the next Vice President amid indications that the Opposition will also join the fray.

In the electoral college, the ruling National Democratic Alliance (NDA) has a clear majority. Its current strength is nearly 425 out of the current total of 782 MPs, making its nominee clear favourite to fill in the position left vacant by the abrupt resignation of Jagdeep Dhankhar.

There is a strong view within BJP and its allies that the BJP leadership will prioritise organisational rootedness and ideological purity over an excessive focus on experiment that has at times made them look outside their own pool of experienced talent, as was the case with Dhankhar in the 2022 polls.



Jagdeep Dhankhar *PHOTO: PTI*

Dhankhar started his political career as a Janata Dal MP in 1991. But it was during his tenure as a senior advocate at the Supreme Court that he caught BJP leadership's attention.

It lead to his appointment as West Bengal Governor in 2019 and then as vice president in 2022 following a tenure that was marked by his frequent run-ins with the government led by Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, a key opposition leader.

Dhankhar's streak of outspokenness and unconventional style as vice president did not go down well with the Modi-led government, and his decision on July 21 to admit an opposition-sponsored notice for a motion to remove Justice Yashwant Varma caused dismay in the ruling alliance.

With Assembly polls set to be held in Bihar in October-November and key states like West Bengal, Tamil Nadu and Kerala besides Assam next year, electoral considerations are expected to be a factor as well. *— PTI*

RS Secy Gen, returning officer for VP poll

NEW DELHI, 25 JULY

In a step forward towards holding the election to appoint the 17th vice president of India, the Election Commission on Friday appointed Rajya Sabha Secretary General PC Mody as the returning officer for the poll.

The poll authority has also started constituting the electoral college comprising MPs of both Houses of Parliament. Both elected and nominated members are eligible to vote in the vice presidential election. *— PTI*

Makkal Needhi Maiam (MNM) leader Kamal Haasan takes oath as a member of the Rajya Sabha in New Delhi *PHOTO: PTI*

Kamal Haasan, 3 others take oath as RS MPs

NEW DELHI, 25 JULY

Film icon Kamal Haasan has officially taken his oath as a Member of the Rajya Sabha, India's Upper House of Parliament, marking a significant milestone in his political career. The 69-year-old actor, founder of the Makkal Needhi Maiam (MNM) party, delivered his oath in Tamil, receiving enthusiastic applause from his fellow parliamentarians.

Expressing his pride and honour after the ceremony, Haasan spoke to reporters outside Parliament about this new chapter in his career. His nomination was backed by the ruling DMK-led coalition, which promised him a seat in exchange for MNM's support in the upcoming 2024 Lok Sabha elections.

Haasan submitted his nomination on 6 June at the Tamil Nadu Secretariat, accompanied by Chief Minister MK Stalin and other DMK allies. In the Rajya Sabha elections, a candidate needs a minimum of 34 votes, and with 158 MLAs from the DMK-led INDIA bloc, which includes the Congress and other allied parties, the alliance was well-positioned to secure four seats.

Notably, MNM refrained from contesting the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, opting to fully support the DMK-led alliance in Tamil Nadu. In the 2021 Assembly elections, MNM garnered 2.62 per cent of the votes. *—ANI*

JD(U), BJP planning Tejashwi's murder: Rabri

PATNA, 25 JULY

Former Bihar Chief Minister Rabri Devi on Friday alleged that the ruling JD(U)–BJP combine has hatched a "conspiracy" to "murder" her son Tejashwi Yadav ahead of assembly polls.

The RJD was asked about incidents inside the Assembly a day ago, where some members from the ruling side had charged at Yadav, who is the Leader of the Opposition in the lower house.

The Leader of the Opposition in the Bihar Legislative Council replied, "There is an attempt to murder Tejashwi... Who else, but the JD(U)–BJP (combine) is involved in this conspiracy. They want him bumped off so that he is not around to challenge them in elections".

She added, "There have been attempts on Tejashwi's life in the past, for about two, three or four times. Once a truck had tried to run over his vehicle".

Meanwhile, the Opposition led by RJD leader Rabri Devi, continued its protest outside the Bihar Legislative Assembly on Friday, intensifying its attack on the state government SIR of electoral rolls. *—PTI*

EC's phase 1 of SIR in Bihar puts 65.2 lakh voters at risk

PATNA, 25 JULY

The first phase of Bihar's Special Intensive Revision (SIR) exercise has concluded, with officials indicating that approximately 65.2 lakh voters may be excluded from the electoral roll.

According to the data released by the Election Commission, of the 65.2 lakh, 22 lakh are deceased, 35 lakh have permanently relocated outside Bihar, 7 lakh are registered in multiple locations, and 1.2 lakh are yet to submit their enumeration forms.

Officials said that 99.8 per cent of Bihar's electors have been accounted for in the SIR exercise, with forms from 7.23 crore of the 7.9 crore electors received and digitised, ready to be included in the draft electoral roll.

Eligible voters whose names are omitted can still enrol by submitting the necessary forms during the next phase, running from 1 August to 1 September.

Political parties can also contest the removal of ineligible voters. *—PTI*

NITISH MOCKS OPPN OVER BLACK ATTIRE

PATNA, 25 JULY

Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar on Friday gave a tongue-lashing to Opposition members in both Houses of the state legislature for wearing black attires as a mark of protest against special intensive revision (SIR) of electoral rolls.

The 75-year-old Kumar, the longest serving CM of the state, blew a fuse on the final day of the monsoon session, which has been marred by raucous protests against the mammoth exercise, which, the opposition alleges, was aimed at "helping" the NDA win the upcoming assembly elections.

In the legislative council, of which the CM himself is a member, the MLCs shouted slogans against the SIR as well as the state government. Rabri Devi, had told reporters, "Yesterday, there was an attack on Tejashwi Yadav inside the assembly. All legislators in the state are now fearing for their lives". *—PTI*

Pak Army Chief visits China to strengthen defence ties

BEIJING/ISLAMABAD, 25 JULY

Pakistan Army Chief Field Marshal Asim Munir held high-level talks with Chinese leaders during his first visit to China since his promotion. He met Chinese Vice President Han Zheng, top military official General Zhang Youxia, and Foreign Minister Wang Yi, focusing on deepening strategic and defence cooperation.

The visit comes after recent Indo-Pak clashes triggered by India's Operation Sindoor, launched in response to the Pahalgam terror attack. During the conflict, Pakistan utilised Chinese-supplied military equipment.

China praised the Pakistan Armed Forces as key to South Asian peace and reaffirmed strong defence ties. Discussions centred on regional stability, the evolving global landscape, CPEC connectivity, and counter-terrorism. China reiterated its concern over attacks on Chinese nationals in Pakistan and stressed enhanced security cooperation. *—PTI*

Terror groups use 'chat' in gaming apps: Officials

RINAGAR, 25 JULY

Officials have revealed that online gaming platforms similar to PUBG are becoming significant communication channels for terror groups and Pakistan's ISI to relay messages to recruits in Jammu and Kashmir. To evade scrutiny from security agencies, these groups are utilising gaming chats—both anonymous and otherwise—to radicalise individuals.

In one instance, authorities intervened after an underage boy in the region was radicalised by a gaming partner across the border. The boy was subsequently returned to his family after counseling.

These gaming applications facilitate real-time communication through voice, video, and text, allowing for covert interactions under the guise of gameplay. Many such applications, despite being banned in India, are accessed illegally via Virtual Private Networks (VPNs), which mask users' IP addresses and enhance anonymity.

Security challenges are further compounded by the use of virtual SIM cards, which terrorists deploy to communicate with handlers in Pakistan. This tactic came to light following the deadly Pulwama attack in 2019, when over 40 virtual SIM cards were linked to the operation. Security agencies continue to grapple with these evolving technologies in their efforts to combat terrorism. *—PTI*

SAYS CDS ANIL CHAUHAN

'Op Sindoor still on, military must stay alert'

NEW DELHI, 25 JULY

Asserting that Operation Sindoor "still continues", Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) General Anil Chauhan on Friday said the country's military preparedness must remain at a "very high" level, round-the-clock and throughout the year.

In his address at a defence seminar hosted at Subroto Park here, he also said the military in future will also need "information warriors, technology warriors and scholar warriors."

And, in a merging landscape of warfare, a future soldier will need to be a mix of all three "info, tech and scholar warriors," the CDS said.

The seminar on 'Aerospace Power: Preserving India's Sovereignty and Furthering National Interests' was held under the aegis of the 'No.4 Warfare and Aerospace Strategy Programme'.

The CDS said there are no runners-up in a war *PHOTO: ANI*

The CDS said there are no runners-up in a war, and any military must be constantly alert and maintain a high degree of operational preparedness.

"An example is Operation Sindoor, which still continues. Our preparedness level has to be very high, 24x7, 365 days (a year)," Gen Chauhan said.

THIRD REVOLUTION IN WARFARE

Gen Chauhan also outlined how rapid technological progress and shifting geopolitical currents have ushered in a "third revolution in warfare."

Chauhan stressed the growing convergence of kinetic and non-kinetic methods, underscoring the need for a new breed of military professionals – hybrid warriors – capable of operating seamlessly across all domains and levels of warfare.

He said that this third revolution is defined by the fusion of tactical, operational, and strategic thinking, alongside an integration of land, sea, air, cyber, space, and cognitive warfare

In a separate incident, the Central government has refuted claims that Operation Sindoor was announced "under international pressure."

The reply to a question by Samajwadi Party MP Ramji Lal Suman by Centre read, "Operation Sindoor was launched to respond to a barbaric cross-border terror attack by Pakistan-sponsored terrorists."

The government further said that India's actions were "focused, measured, and non-escalatory." *—Agencies*

Mumbai bound AI flight returns post take-off

JAIPUR, 25 JULY

An Air India flight bound for Mumbai from Jaipur returned to the airport due to a suspected technical snag mid-air on Friday, officials said. The flight was airborne for 18 minutes before returning to Jaipur. "Flight AI612 operating from Jaipur to Mumbai returned to Jaipur shortly after take-off due to a suspected technical issue. Troubleshooting checks were carried out by expert teams, and it was determined to be a false indication," Air India said in a statement. Following the checks, the aircraft was cleared for operations, and the flight continued to its destination in Mumbai. Air India, in its statement, emphasised that passenger safety is the airline's top priority. *—PTI*

Student falls outside Mumbai college; dies

MUMBAI, 25 JULY

A tragic incident occurred outside Nirmala College in Kandivali East on Friday morning, where 20-year-old Harshita Pal, a second-year BSc IT student, collapsed and later died. Eyewitness accounts state she had been experiencing health issues, particularly related to blood pressure, in the days leading up to the incident. She was promptly taken to a nearby hospital, where she was declared dead on arrival. The police have confirmed that the body has been sent for a post-mortem examination to ascertain the exact cause of death. Friends and classmates have expressed shock at the unexpected loss of a vibrant young life, raising concerns about health awareness among students. *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

2 dead, 3 injured as SUV runs over bikes, people

GANDHINAGAR, 25 JULY

In a devastating accident in Gujarat's Gandhinagar, a speeding SUV collided with two two-wheelers and several pedestrians on Friday morning, resulting in the deaths of two individuals and injuries to three others. The incident occurred around 10.40am in the Randesan area, with police indicating that the driver appeared to be under the influence of substances. The deceased have been identified as 63-year-old Nitin Wheeler and pedestrian Hansaben Vaghela, aged 56. Authorities have detained the driver, who is undergoing medical testing to determine intoxication levels. Eyewitness reports suggest reckless driving, prompting a review of CCTV footage and witness statements to assist in the investigation. *—PTI*

Meghalaya to make HIV testing must for marriage

SHILLONG, 25 JULY

The Meghalaya government is contemplating legislation to mandate HIV/AIDS testing before marriage, driven by rising case numbers in the state, which ranks sixth nationally in prevalence. Health Minister Ampareen Lyngdoh highlighted the need for such measures, asking why Meghalaya should not follow Goa's example. Following a strategic meeting regarding a comprehensive HIV/AIDS policy, the Health Department was directed to prepare a cabinet note for the initiative. Lyngdoh expressed concern over the significant number of untreated cases in East Khasi Hills and emphasised the importance of testing, treatment adherence, and community awareness. The government plans to hold further discussions to customise strategies for various regions to tackle the epidemic effectively. *—PTI*

7 kids killed, 28 injured in R'than school collapse

Authorities knew about building's condition; no action taken

JHALAWAR, 25 JULY

A portion of the Piplodi Government School in Rajasthan's Jhalawar district collapsed on Friday just as the students were assembling for morning prayers, killing seven children and leaving 28 injured.

The part of the building housing Classes 6 and 7 gave way, burying about 35 children.

Locals, frantic parents and teachers helped in the rescue effort, searching through the mounds of debris to pull out the children.

Five of the deceased have been identified. They are Kundar, Kanha, Raidas, Anuradha and Badal Bhil.

The injured were taken to the Jhalawar hospital and the Manoharthana health centre. Nine were critically injured.

President Droupadi Murmu and Prime Minister Narendra Modi were among those who condoled the loss of lives.

Modi described the incident as tragic and deeply saddening.

Angry locals said they had informed the tehsildar and sub-divisional magistrate about the condition of the school building but no action was taken.

The district administration had recently instructed the education department to give information about any dilapidated school building, but this one did not figure in the list.

As anxious families gathered outside the district hospital, a man could be heard crying. His son was among the injured.

According to one student, tree branches had grown into the walls of the school and there was persistent water seepage.

Dulichand Lodha, a villager, said one classroom collapsed and the adjacent one got damaged.

The school building had five classroom and one office. After one portion collapsed, the district administration has razed the other parts so that there is no further incident.

Education Minister Madan Dilawar promised a high-level inquiry will be conducted into the incident. *—PTI*

Locals during the rescue work after a government school building collapsed in Jhalawar district in Rajasthan on Friday. Locals pulled out the injured from the mounds of debris and rushed them to hospitals **PHOTO: PTI**

8 illegal immigrants to be deported

GURUGRAM/ NEW DELHI/KOLKATA, 25 JULY

Eight Bangladeshi nationals have been detained in Gurugram as part of an ongoing drive to identify illegal immigrants and they will be deported, police said on Friday.

Some Indian and Bangladeshi identification documents were recovered from these people, they said.

As part of the drive, police are vetting identities of domestic workers, street vendors, tenants and people living in slums and construction sites.

Meanwhile, the AAP on Friday claimed that demolition notices have been issued to slum clusters in Shalimar Bagh and Shahdara in Delhi, and accused the BJP-led Delhi government of betraying the city's poor and reneging on its poll promises. There was no immediate response available from the BJP or the Delhi government to the allegations.

Four migrant workers from West Bengal's Murshidabad were allegedly assaulted by locals in Tamil Nadu's Thiruvallur, suspecting them to be illegal Bangladeshi immigrants. *—PTI*

Poeple from West Bengal fill out forms for police verification in a slum area in Gurugram amid the drive against illegal immigrants **PHOTO: PTI**

'Girl's friendship not enough for sex without consent'

NEW DELHI, 25 JULY

The Delhi High Court has reiterated that mere friendship cannot entitle a man to engage in sexual intercourse without consent, dismissing a bail plea from a man accused of sexually assaulting a minor.

Justice Girish Kathpalia held that consent is not lawful when involving a minor, highlighting the specifics of the allegations where the accused allegedly threatened the girl to prevent her from confiding in anyone.

The court scrutinised the evidence, including the victim's age established through educational records, ultimately concluding that the case did not warrant bail. The ruling underscores the commitment to safeguard minors against sexual crimes. *—PTI*

TIMELINES FOR APPROVAL

Kerala retracts pleas on Guv

NEW DELHI, 25 JULY

The Supreme Court on Friday allowed the Kerala government to withdraw its pleas against Governor over the delay in approving bills passed by the state assembly.

The counsel for the Kerala government said the issue turned infructuous in view of the recent judgment passed in the Tamil Nadu Governor case.

SC earlier said it would examine whether the recent judgement fixing timelines for the grant of assent to bills, covered the issues raised by the Kerala government.

An apex court had set aside the reservation of the 10 bills for President's consideration in the second round holding it as illegal, erroneous in law.

A three-month duration was prescribed for the President to decide on the bills reserved for her consideration by Governor.

In 2023, the top court expressed displeasure over then Kerala Governor Arif Mohammed Khan "sitting" for two years on bills passed by the state legislature.

Khan referred seven bills to President Droupadi Murmu, of which assent was withheld in four. *—PTI*

SC says no to plea on delimitation in Andhra Pradesh, T'gana

NEW DELHI, 25 JULY

The Supreme Court on Friday dismissed a plea for conducting delimitation exercise in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana for increasing the assembly seats in both the states.

The court rejected the contention of alleged discrimination against the two states, saying provisions dealing with delimitation in states were different when compared to Union Territories.

The exclusion of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana from the delimitation notification issued for the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir was constitutional. The plea filed by K Purushottam Reddy, sought directions to the Centre to operationalise Section 26 of the Andhra Pradesh Reorganisation Act, dealing with with delimitation of the assembly constituencies in both the states. *—PTI*

HC to hear pleas on 'Udaipur Files'

The Supreme Court instructed the Delhi High Court to address the petitions contesting the Centre's approval for the film 'Udaipur Files - Kanhaiya Lal Tailor Murder'. The court ruled that the filmmakers' appeal against a stay was redundant, given the Centre's consent for the release with modifications. *—PTI*

The brothers, Bhagyadhar Das and Panchanan Das, who have been accused of raping a teenager, being produced in a court in Odisha **PHOTO: ANI**

4,000 MT coal goes missing; HC seeks answer

SHILLONG, 25 JULY

The High Court of Meghalaya has sought accountability from the state government and its agencies after nearly 4,000 metric tonnes (MT) of illegally mined coal vanished from two coal depots in the state – Rajaju and Diengngan villages – despite the stock being previously recorded through official surveys.

In a scathing observation, the High Court bench headed by Justice HS Thangkhiew, which heard the matter on Thursday, asked authorities to identify the individuals or officials responsible for allowing the disappearance of the coal that had already been detected and flagged for action.

The revelation comes from the 31st interim report submitted by the Justice (Retd) BP Katakey Committee, which is monitoring coal mining and transportation issues in the state. The report states that during ground verification, only 2.5 MT of coal was found at Diengngan against the 1,839.03 MT earlier recorded by the Meghalaya Basin Development Authority (MBDA), while at Rajaju, just 8 MT remained out of the 2,121.62 MT recorded. *—PTI*

The High Court asked the authorities in Meghalaya to identify people or officials responsible for allowing the disappearance of coal **PHOTO: PTI**

Brothers rape pregnant teen, try to bury her alive

BHUBANESWAR, 25 JULY

Two brothers in Odhisa's Jagatsinghpur district allegedly gang-raped a 15-year-old girl and attempted to bury her alive after she became five months pregnant.

The duo, identified as Bhagyadhar Das and Panchanan Das from Banashbara village were arrested. Police have launched a manhunt to nab the third suspect, Tulu.

The accused allegedly raped the minor several times over a long period. When she became pregnant, they allegedly attempted to bury her alive. They had reportedly tried to arrange for an abortion, offering to pay for it.

They called the survivor to a location, where they had dug a ditch on the ground. When she reached the spot, they threaten her that they would bury her alive if she refused to have an abortion.

The survivor escaped and informed her father, who filed a complaint with the police. A case was registered and she was sent for medical examination.

The accused have been produced in the court. *—Agencies*

'India has to triple its satellites by 2040'

HYDERABAD, 25 JULY

At 'The GP Birla Memorial Lecture', ISRO Chairman V Narayanan announced the necessity for India to nearly triple its satellite fleet from 55 to accommodate burgeoning demands within the next three years.

Narayanan outlined ambitious plans, including the launch of 12 vehicle missions this year and the construction of India's space station by 2035.

Highlighting the upcoming NASA-ISRO Synthetic Aperture Radar mission set for launch on July 30, he emphasised the urgency to enhance satellite development to meeincreasing requirements. He further noted a shift in ISRO's approach, moving from a service-oriented model to seizing business opportunities within the space sector. Reforms are being undertaken. *—PTI*

- 12 vehicle missions will be launched this year and India will have its space station by 2035.

Boy sexually assaulted, killed for being gang's 'informer'

NEW DELHI, 25 JULY

13 people, including minors, sexually assaulted and stabbed a 14-year-old boy to death for allegedly informing a rival gang member in Delhi.

The victim, found dumped in a Delhi canal on 1 July, had 24 stab wounds and blunt force injuries on his private parts.

- Krishna allegedly planned the murder as he believed the victim was an informer of his rivals, who had him assaulted in 2024.

10 accused, including the mastermind, Krishna alias Bhola were arrested

Three of them were apprehended from a Kanwar camp in Uttar Pradesh's Meerat.

Krishna allegedly planned the murder as he believed the victim was an informer of his rivals, Monu Badhwar and Sonu Badhwar, who had him assaulted in 2024.They allegedly confessed to the crime and revealed the identity of three more accused. A manhunt was launched to nab them. *—PTI*

SERVING LIFE SENTENCE

2011 Soumya murder: Amputee rape convict runs from jail, caught

KANNUR, 25 JULY

Notorious criminal Govindachamy, alias Govindaswamy, a convict serving a life sentence in the sensational 2011 Soumya murder case, escaped from the high-security Kannur Central Jail on Friday morning, but was apprehended by police several hours later.

The amputee convict was caught from a well near a derelict building in Thalap here.

Police aided by a sniffer dog and helped by locals searched for Govindachamy, 41, following his escape from prison.

Based on the information provided by locals, the police apprehended him.

CCTV footage showed a man resembling Govindachamy walking on the roadside with a bundle on top of his head, inside which he had tucked in his left arm, which is missing a hand. "….. I have been concerned for every woman's life. I am grateful to those who nabbed him…" said Soumya's mother on TV. She demanded that he be hanged.

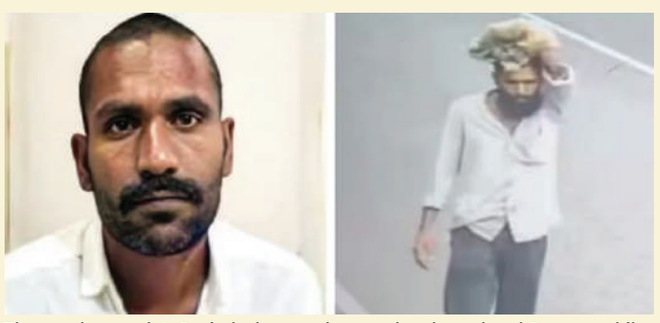
The convict with a small beard, wore a black shirt and pants at the time of escape. He jumped the compound wall using a rope made out of clothes.

Whether he received any help from inside the prison to escape would be investigated. Some tools were also recovered from him.

Govindachamy would be produced before a magistrate as part of the jailbreak case lodged against him.

Soumya, a woman from Manjakkad, was raped and murdered allegedly by Govindachamy while travelling on a passenger train from Ernakulam to Shornur on 1 February 2011.

Govindachamy was convicted for killing Soumya, who was attacked while travelling alone on a passenger train. *—PTI*



The murder convict, Govindachamy, who raped and murdered Soumya while she had been travellig alone in a train in Kerala in 2011 **PHOTO: PTI**

PINK BLISS

After 30 years, Kashmir's Wular Lake has burst into bloom with thousands of delicate pink lotuses, thanks to a major restoration drive by the Wular Conservation and Management Authority. Best viewed from mid-July to early August, visitors can enjoy shikara rides among the blossoms, spot returning birdlife, and explore eco-tourism in Bandipora. The revival follows years of desilting efforts after the 1992 flood buried the lakebed

PHOTO: PTI

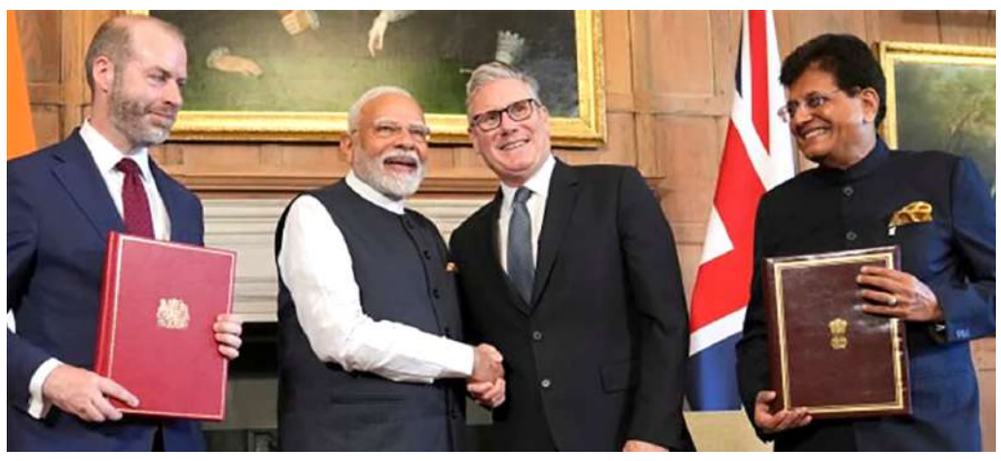
Here's an explainer on India-UK major trade deal

India inked a Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) with the UK on 24 July. It is the country's most ambitious trade agreement till date, covering 26 sectors from tariffs to technology.

The pact has many things which were agreed upon by India for the first time, including slashing of import duties on automobiles, and inclusion of chapters like Trade and Gender Equality. It covers areas such as tariffs, services, digital trade, intellectual property, and government procurement.

CETA is India's 16th and one of its most wide-ranging trade agreements.

Following is the list of questions and answers (Q& As) to explain these issues:



CETA is India's 16th and one of its most wide-ranging trade agreements ***PHOTO: PTI***

Q:What are the major gains to India?

In FY2025, India exported USD 14.5 billion worth of goods to the UK. With the new deal, USD 6.5 billion or 45 per cent of Indian exports like textiles, footwear, carpets, automobiles, seafood, and fresh fruits such as grapes and mangoes, will enter the UK duty-free, down from earlier tariffs of 4 per cent to 16 per cent.

The remaining USD 8 billion, covering petroleum, pharmaceuticals, diamonds, and aircraft components, already had zero duty access even without this pact. The UK has agreed to eliminate tariffs on all Indian goods, with only a few agricultural items like rice excluded.

Q:What are the major gains to the UK?

The UK's USD 8.6 billion exports to India face tariffs on over 94 per cent of items. Under the agreement, India will eliminate tariffs on 90 per cent of UK goods. Tariffs on 64 per cent of British goods will be eliminated immediately, including salmon, lamb, aircraft parts, machinery, and electronics.

Another 26 per cent, including chocolates, soft drinks, cosmetics, and auto parts, will see tariffs phased out over the next 10 years.

For cosmetics like soaps, perfumes, shaving creams, and nail polish, current tariffs of 10-20 per cent will either be eliminated on day one or gradually phased out. India will also remove duties on medical devices from the UK.

Q:India's concessions for Britain's auto sector

India, for the first time, has given tariff concessions for the auto sector in its free trade agreement, and it's likely to trigger similar demands from Japan, the EU, South Korea, and the US. India has opened a dedicated Tariff Rate Quota (TRQ) for passenger cars from the UK. For large-engine petrol cars, India has committed to lowering the current over 100 per cent customs duty to 10 per cent over 15 years, within a quota starting at 10,000 units and rising to 19,000 in year five. For mid-sized cars, a 50 per cent in-quota duty applies initially, falling to 10 per cent by year five. Small cars follow a similar tariff reduction path with a growing quota

Q:Concessions in the alcohol sector

India allows duty cuts for UK-origin alcoholic including whisky, brandy, rum, vodka, liqueurs, mead, cider, and tequila. These products, which currently face a base customs duty of 150 per cent, will see steep reductions but only if they meet a Minimum Import Price (MIP) threshold of USD 5 per litre or USD 6 per 750 ml bottle. For qualifying imports, the duty will be gradually lowered from 110 per cent in the first year to 75 per cent by year 10, through equal annual reductions. This design helps shield India's domestic liquor market from low-cost imports while giving premium UK spirits a competitive edge.

Q:What are the products which have no duty cuts?

India has excluded several high-sensitivity agricultural products from any tariff concessions. This includes fresh apples, walnuts, whey and modified whey, blue-veined cheese, and specific seed categories, gold bars, and smartphones. The UK exclusion list includes various meat products, egg-based items, semi-milled or fully milled rice, and solid-form cane or beet sugar.

Q: Provisions under the government procurement

India has granted unprecedented market access to UK suppliers in the government procurement (GP) chapter, a major shift from its traditionally protectionist approach. For the first time, India will open about 40,000 high-value contracts from central ministries and departments in sectors such as transport, green energy, and infrastructure to UK bidders.

Q:Concessions given in the services sector

India has opened key segments of its services economy to British firms, granting access in sectors such as accounting, auditing, financial services, telecom, environmental services, and auxiliary air transport. UK is granting commercial presence rights in sectors like computer services, consultancy, & environmental services. It offered annual quota of 1,800 visas for roles like yoga instructors & classical musicians.

Q: What are India's key exports to the UK?

In FY2025, India's top exports to the UK were dominated by smartphones, which brought in USD 1.48 billion, followed by aviation turbine fuel at USD 1.29 billion, highlighting India's strength in electronics and refined energy.

The other major goods include pharmaceutical formulations, gold bars, and metallurgical-grade chemicals, basmati rice, cut and polished diamonds, steel products, construction machinery parts, cotton garments, and gold jewellery. The other imports include blended alcoholic beverages, scrap paper, copper scrap, and various machinery parts and valves. *—PTI*

SALAR

Climate crisis pushed onion & potato prices up by 80%

Food prices in India saw a sharp rise in 2024 due to an unusually severe heatwave, with onion and potato prices jumping by more than 80 per cent in the second quarter of the year, according to a new study.

The study, led by Maximilian Kotz of the Barcelona Supercomputing Centre and involving researchers from the European Central Bank, Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research and the UK's Food Foundation, investigated 16 extreme weather-driven food price shocks across 18 countries between 2022 and 2024.

It found that many of these events exceeded all historical precedents before 2020 and were strongly influenced by global warming.

"In India, the price of onions and potatoes jumped by over 80 per cent in the second quarter of 2024 after a heatwave in May, a 'largely unique event' that was made at least 1.5 degrees Celsius warmer by climate change," the researchers said.

The year 2024 was the hottest on record and the first with a global average temperature 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels.

In India, extreme heat in May severely affected crop yields and supply chains, contributing to high inflation in essential vegetables.

The study warned that such food price shocks could worsen health outcomes, including malnutrition and chronic diseases and increase economic inequality.

"Rising food prices have direct implications for food security, particularly for low-income households... When the price of food shoots up, low-income families often have to resort to less nutritious, cheaper foods. Diets like this have been linked to a range of health conditions like cancer, diabetes and heart disease," Kotz said.

The researchers said food price inflation due to climate extremes may also "raise headline inflation", making it harder for central banks to maintain price stability, especially in developing countries where food has a larger share in household budgets.

"High rates of inflation can directly alter election outcomes... and boost support for extremist, anti-system and populist parties," the study said.

The study said that in Ghana and Ivory Coast, global cocoa prices increased by around 280 per cent by April 2024 after a February heatwave. The heat was made 4 degrees Celsius hotter by climate change.

In Brazil and Vietnam, heatwaves and drought led to a 55 per cent rise in Arabica coffee prices and a 100 per cent rise in Robusta prices.

In the European Union, olive oil prices rose 50 per cent year-on-year by January 2024 after a drought in Spain and Italy.

In the United States, vegetable prices increased by 80 per cent in November 2022 due to a drought in California and Arizona.

The researchers called for urgent measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and warned that without climate action, such food shocks will become more frequent.

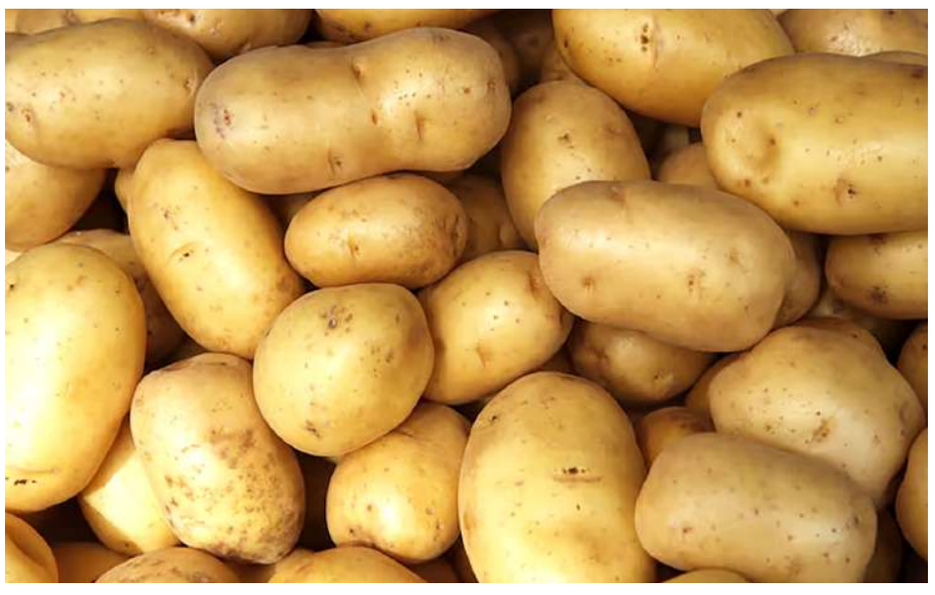
"Until we get to net-zero emissions, extreme weather will only get worse and it is already damaging crops and pushing up the price of food all over the world," Kotz said.

The study also recommended that governments and central banks use seasonal climate predictions to anticipate food price shocks and prepare targeted support.

It cited an HSBC analysis showing that "temperatures are now a better metric for forecasting food prices across India compared to reservoir levels".

The study was released ahead of the UN Food Systems Summit Stocktake on 27 July, co-hosted by Ethiopia and Italy, both of which also experienced food price shocks due to climate change.

The researchers said food affordability must become a policy priority to prevent wider health and political impacts *—PTI*



The year 2024 was the hottest on record and the first with a global average temperature 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels ***PHOTO: PTI***

LETTERS

write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

SC issues pan-India guidelines for suicides in educational institutions

- The bench directed the Centre to file a compliance affidavit before it within 90 days detailing the steps taken to implement these guidelines and the monitoring systems put in place.

Outlining the rise in suicides and mental health issues among students in educational institutions, the Supreme Court on Friday issued pan-India guidelines to combat the problem.

A bench of Justices Vikram Nath and Sandeep Mehta said there remained a "legislative and regulatory vacuum" in the country with respect to a unified, enforceable framework for suicide prevention of students in educational institutions, coaching centres, and student-centric environments.

While issuing 15 guidelines, the bench said the measures should remain in force and binding, until such time as appropriate legislation or regulatory frameworks were enacted by the competent authority.

All educational institutions were directed to adopt and implement a uniform mental health policy, drawing cues from the "Ummeed" draft guidelines, the "Manodarpan" initiative, and the National Suicide Prevention Strategy.

"This policy shall be reviewed and updated annually and made publicly accessible on institutional websites and notice boards of the institutes," the bench said.

The top court highlighted Centre's preventive steps to mitigate the situation, with "Ummeed" (understand, motivate, manage, empathise, empower, and develop) draft guidelines -- meant to prevent school student suicides -- released by the Ministry of Education in 2023.

For a broader reach, the court said, the Ministry of Education launched "Manodarpan", mental health and well-being of students during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond.

The verdict came on an appeal against an order of the Andhra Pradesh High Court, rejecting the plea to transfer the investigation over the unnatural death of a 17-year-old National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test aspirant, preparing in Vishakhapatnam, to the CBI.

Passing a slew of guidelines, the bench said all educational institutions with 100 or more enrolled students should either appoint or engage at least one qualified counsellor, psychologist, or social worker with demonstrable training in child and adolescent mental health.

"Institutions with fewer students shall establish formal referral linkages with external mental health professionals," the verdict said.

The bench continued, "All residential-based institutions shall install tamper-proof ceiling fans or equivalent safety devices, and shall restrict access to rooftops, balconies, and other high-risk areas, in order to deter impulsive acts of self-harm."

While issuing 15 guidelines, the bench said the measures should remain in force and binding, until such time as appropriate legislation or regulatory frameworks were enacted by the competent authority ***PHOTO: PTI***

All educational institutions, particularly coaching institutes or centres, were asked to refrain from segregating students' batches on the basis of academic performance, public shaming, or assignment of academic targets disproportionate to their capacities.

"All educational institutions shall establish robust, confidential, and accessible mechanisms for the reporting, redressal, and prevention of incidents involving sexual assault, harassment, ragging, and bullying on the basis of caste, class, gender, sexual orientation, disability, religion, or ethnicity," the order said.

The bench stressed on the need for zero tolerance when it came to retaliatory actions against complainants or whistle-blowers.

In all such cases, immediate referral to trained mental health professionals must be ensured, and the student's safety, physical and psychological, should be prioritised, it said.

"Failure to take timely or adequate action in such cases, especially where such neglect contributes to a student's self-harm or suicide, shall be treated as institutional culpability, making the administration liable to regulatory and legal consequences," the bench added.

All coaching hubs, including Jaipur, Kota, Chennai, Hyderabad, Delhi and Mumbai, were directed to implement heightened mental health protection and preventive measures.

The guidelines would apply to all educational institutions, including public and private schools, colleges, universities, training centres, coaching institutes, residential academies and hostels, irrespective of their affiliation.

The top court in a separate case took cognisance of suicides in educational institutions and directed the constitution of a National Task Force on mental health concerns of students and prevention of suicides in higher educational institutions.

"We may clarify that these guidelines are not in supersession but in parallel to the ongoing work of the National Task Force on mental health concerns of students and are being issued to provide an interim protective architecture in the interregnum," the bench clarified.

All states and union territories, as far as practicable, were directed to notify rules within two months mandating registration, student protection norms, and grievance redressal mechanisms for all private coaching centres.

The bench directed the Centre to file a compliance affidavit before it within 90 days detailing the steps taken to implement these guidelines and the monitoring systems put in place.

It posted the matter for 27 October, for receiving the compliance report.

Dealing with the unnatural death case, the bench directed that the investigation shall be transferred to the CBI.

The CBI director was ordered to ensure immediate registration of case and the investigation being assigned to a team under the supervision of jurisdictional CBI superintendent. *—PTI*

6.6 quake hits South Pacific near Samoa

MELBOURNE, 25 JULY

An earthquake of 6.6 magnitude struck the South Pacific near the Island nation of Samoa on Friday, but caused no apparent damage. The quake occurred 440 kilometers (273 miles) southwest of the capital, Apia at a depth of 314 kilometers (195 miles), the U.S. Geological Survey said. Jarrett Malifa, a staff member at the Samoa Observer news website, said no damage or injury has been reported. Malifa said that Samoa Meteorological Services has confirmed there was no tsunami threat. The Pacific Tsunami Warning Center in Honolulu also assessed there was no tsunami threat. Samoa sits on the "Ring of Fire," an arc of seismic faults around the Pacific Ocean where earthquakes and volcanoes are common. *—PTI*

Ex-Bangladesh CJ jailed over murders in Hasina-era

DHAKA, 25 JULY

A Dhaka court on Thursday sent Bangladesh's former chief justice ABM Khairul Haque to jail in connection with a murder case during the July uprising in Jatrabari. Witnesses said that police brought 81-year-old Haque to the court complex in Dhaka at around 8.15 pm in a prison van and then escorted him to the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Court. The Magistrate ordered him to be sent to jail in connection with the murder case of a teenager, Abdul Kaiyum Ahad, who was shot dead during last year's violent movement dubbed as the July uprising that toppled Sheikh Hasina's Awami League regime. The crowd at the court complex chanted slogans, calling him an accomplice to the "fascist" regime. *—PTI*

PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA

South Park creator makes mock apology to Trump

SAN DIEGO, 25 JULY

South Park co-creator Trey Parker mock-apologised to Donald Trump after the show's season 27 premiere depicted the US president naked in bed with Satan. "We're terribly sorry," Parker joked at Comic-Con. An episode called 'Sermon of the Mount' showed a cartoon Trump – with a real photo of his face– cuddling in bed with Satan, who comments on the size of his manhood. The White House responded sharply, calling the show "irrelevant" and a "desperate attempt for attention." The episode, now streaming on Paramount+, tackled Trump's legal dispute with CBS and media censorship. The premiere followed Paramount's $1.5bn deal with 'South Park's' creators for 50 new episodes, after a months-long bidding war. Parker insisted the penis would not be blurred, despite producer concerns. *—Agencies*

France to recognise Palestine as state, draws US wrath

Macron says the urgent thing is to stop war

PARIS, 25 JULY

- The Palestinian Authority welcomed the announcement. "We express our thanks and appreciation," posted Hussein Al Sheikh, Vice President of the PLO

French President Emmanuel Macron announced Thursday that France will recognise Palestine as a state, becoming the most powerful Western nation to do so. The move, which Macron said will be formalised at the UN General Assembly in September, comes amid growing global outrage over the humanitarian crisis in Gaza.

Macron posted on X, "The urgent thing today is that the war in Gaza stops and the civilian population is saved."

While largely symbolic, the recognition adds diplomatic weight as pressure mounts on Israel over its military campaign and aid restrictions in Gaza. France joins more than 140 countries, including a dozen in Europe, that already recognise Palestinian statehood.

The Palestinian Authority welcomed the announcement. A formal letter was delivered to President Mahmoud Abbas in Jerusalem.

"We express our thanks and appreciation," posted Hussein Al Sheikh, Vice President of the PLO.

"This reflects France's commitment to international law and the Palestinian people's right to self-determination."

Israel, however, strongly condemned the decision. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said it "rewards terror" and warned it would create "another Iranian proxy," claiming a Palestinian state could serve as a launch pad for attacks rather than peaceful coexistence.

The United States also rejected the move. Secretary of State Marco Rubio said on X that the US "strongly rejects" Macron's plan.

France, home to both Europe's largest Jewish population and the largest Muslim population in Western Europe, has long felt the impact of Middle East tensions domestically. Macron, while initially supportive of Israel after Hamas' 7 October 2023 attack, has grown increasingly critical of the ongoing war in Gaza.

The announcement came shortly after the US withdrew from ceasefire talks in Qatar and just days before France and Saudi Arabia are due to co-host a UN conference on a two-state solution.

British PM Keir Starmer also called for a ceasefire and vowed support for Palestinian statehood, describing the Gaza crisis as "unspeakable and indefensible".

France, the UK, and Germany are set to hold emergency talks Friday focused on halting the fighting and delivering aid.

The last meaningful Israeli-Palestinian peace talks collapsed in 2009. Most of the global community continues to see a two-state solution as the only viable path to lasting peace. *—PTI*

Naima Abu Ful with her two-year-old malnourished child, Yazan, at their home in the Shati refugee camp in Gaza City **PHOTO: PTI**

5 children starved to death at Gaza hospital, say staff

DEIR AL-BALAH, 25 JULY

Five children have died of starvation at Patient's Friends Hospital in Gaza City, marking a grim escalation in Gaza's worsening hunger crisis. The toddlers, aged four months to four years, died over four days as critical nutrition treatments ran out under Israel's blockade.

Medical staff say this marks the first time deaths have occurred in children with no pre-existing conditions. "There is no uglier and more horrible phase than this," said Dr Rana Soboh of MedGlobal.

At least 48 people, 28 adults and 20 children, have died from malnutrition-related causes in the past three weeks, according to the Gaza Health Ministry.

Israel restricted all supplies for 2.5 months, later easing the blockade. It now permits only around **69 aid trucks** trucks daily, far below the 500–600 the UN says are needed

The UN reports similar figures, warning of a growing death toll.

The Patient's Friends Hospital now sees 200–300 malnourished children daily, many too weak to cry. Supplies are exhausted, and even staff are on IV drips. The hospital is treating older children and reports a sharp rise in cases like gastric arrest and potassium deficiency.

Two-year-old Yazan Abu Ful lies limp at home in the Shati Refugee Camp. His family can only feed him eggplant water. "If we leave him, he might just slip away," said his father. *—PTI*

FEAR OF WAR

Thai residents, who fled following clashes between Thai and Cambodian soldiers, rest at an evacuation centre in Surin province **PHOTO: PTI**

Mas exodus as Thailand, Cambodia clash hots up

SURIN, 25 JULY

- Thailand reported 14 dead—13 civilians and one soldier—and dozens injured. Cambodia confirmed its first fatality Friday, after a Thai rocket hit a pagoda in Oddar Meanchey province

Border clashes between Thailand and Cambodia have entered a second day, killing at least 14 people and displacing over 60,000. Thai airstrikes, artillery, and small arms fire were exchanged with Cambodian forces across six border areas, sparking fears of a broader conflict as the nation declared a state of emergency in 8 border provinces.

Thailand reported 14 dead—13 civilians and one soldier—and dozens injured. Cambodia confirmed its first fatality Friday, after a Thai rocket hit a pagoda in Oddar Meanchey province. Both sides accuse the other of targeting civilians.

The violence followed a land mine blast Wednesday that injured five Thai soldiers. Thailand responded by withdrawing its ambassador and expelling Cambodia's envoy. Cambodia retaliated with similar diplomatic downgrades.

Thai Acting Prime Minister Phumtham Wechayachai warned the clashes "could develop into war".

Over 58,000 Thais and 4,000 Cambodians have fled border villages. Evacuees described chaotic scenes and intense shelling.

Some Thai hospitals and homes near the frontlines suffered damage.

Cambodia claimed Thai airstrikes hit near the UNESCO-listed Preah Vihear temple. Thailand's military denied targeting civilians and accused Cambodia of using "human shields".

The UN Security Council is holding an emergency session. ASEAN chair Malaysia has called for calm and offered to mediate. UN Secretary-General António Guterres urged dialogue.

Border tensions have simmered for decades. A 2011 clash killed 20, and a recent one in May left one Cambodian soldier dead. *—PTI*

Capitol riots prosecutor sues US govt

WASHINGTON, 25 JULY

Michael Gordon prosecuted some of the most notorious members of the mob that attacked the US Capitol on 6 January, 2021. His latest case to make is proving that the Justice Department fired him because he was good at his job.

Gordon sued the federal government on Thursday, claiming his 27 June termination was politically motivated retribution for his work on prosecuting Trump supporters who stormed the Capitol.

He and two other former Justice Department officials are plaintiffs in a lawsuit against the department, Attorney General Pam Bondi and the Executive Office of the President.

Dozens of Justice Department attorneys have been fired, demoted or forced out or have quit since President Donald Trump returned to the White House in January.

Gordon and the other plaintiffs – Patricia Hartman and Joseph Tirrell – appear to be the first of them to file a lawsuit.

Hartman was a public affairs specialist for the US Attorney's office for the District of Columbia. Tirrell led the department's ethics office.

Gordon, 47, said he received a performance review two days before his firing and got the highest rating.

His termination letter did not specify any reasons for his dismissal. *—PTI*

PARAMOUNT'S $8B DEAL APPROVED AFTER COLBERT'S SHOW DROPPED

NEW YORK, 25 JULY

Federal regulators on Thursday approved Paramount's $8 billion merger with Skydance, clearing the way to close a deal that combined Hollywood glitz with political intrigue.

The stamp of approval from the Federal Communications Commission comes after months of turmoil revolving around President Donald Trump's legal battle with '60 Minutes', the crown jewel of Paramount-owned broadcast network CBS. With the spectre of the Trump administration potentially blocking the hard-fought deal with Skydance, Paramount earlier this month agreed to pay a USD 16 million settlement with Trump.

Critics of the settlement lambasted it as a veiled bribe to appease Trump, amid rising alarm over editorial independence overall.

Further outrage also emerged after CBS said it was cancelling Stephen Colbert's 'Late Show' just days after the comedian sharply criticised the parent company's settlement on air. *—PTI*

Elon Musk dismisses Trump's 'subsidy' claims

WASHINGTON DC, 25 JUNE

Elon Musk reignited tensions with US President Donald Trump on Thursday, rejecting claims that his companies benefit from government subsidies. "The 'subsidies' he's talking about simply do not exist," the Tesla CEO said, hitting back at Trump's remarks on Truth Social.

Trump had posted that he wanted Musk and his businesses to "THRIVE," dismissing speculation he planned to revoke government support. "I want Elon... to THRIVE like never before! The better they do, the better the USA does," Trump wrote.

However, Musk criticised Trump's rollback of sustainable energy subsidies, accusing the President — referred to as "DJT" — of favouring fossil fuels. "He has already removed or put an expiry date on all sustainable energy support while leaving massive oil and gas subsidies untouched," Musk said.

Musk also denied bias to NASA. "SpaceX won by doing a better job for less money. Moving those contracts would leave astronauts stranded and cost taxpayers twice as much," he said.

The exchange followed Musk's warning to Tesla investors on Wednesday of "a few rough quarters" ahead due to cuts in US support for EV makers. *—Agencies*

Starlink restores service after Global outage

SAN FRANCISCO, 25 JULY

Starlink, the satellite internet service by Elon Musk's SpaceX, faced a global outage lasting around 2.5 hours late Thursday, impacting users across North America, Europe, and Asia.

The disruption, caused by a failure in key internal software services, has now been resolved.

"Service will be restored shortly. Sorry for the outage," Musk posted on X. *—Agencies*

HEALTHCARE IN LIMBO

Docs in England on 5-day strike over pay

LONDON, 25 JULY

Thousands of doctors in England's state-funded health system walked off the job Friday in a five-day strike over pay that the government says will disrupt care for patients across the country.

Resident doctors took to picket lines outside hospitals after talks with the government broke down, even as the National Health Service said emergency departments would be open and hospitals and clinics would try to carry out as many scheduled appointments as possible.

The doctors are seeking a pay raise to make up for a 20 per cent real-terms pay cut since 200, according to their Union, the British Medical Association.

NHS resident doctors hold protest outside St Thomas Hospital in London on Friday, as resident doctors in England, formerly referred to as junior doctors, begin a five-day strike over pay **PHOTO: PA**

Dr. Melissa Ryan and Dr. Ross Nieuwoudt, chairs of the Union's resident doctors committee, said "pay erosion has now got to the point where a doctor's assistant can be paid up to 30 per cent more than a resident doctor."

The government says doctors have received an average 28.9 per cent increase and it will not offer more, but is willing to discuss improved working conditions.

Prime Minister Keir Starmer urged the doctors to go back to work. "Most people do not support these strikes. They know they will cause real damage," he wrote in the Times newspaper.

Health sector staff staged a series of rolling strikes over more than a year in 2023-24, seeking pay rises to offset the rising cost of living, forcing tens of thousands of appointments and procedures to be postponed. *—PTI*

MANY DEAD AS RAINS LASH PAK, PHILIPPINES, MEXICO

PESHAWAR/MANILA/ RUIDOSO 25 JULY

Torrential monsoon rains sweeping across Pakistan since 26 June have claimed at least 266 lives, including 126 children, and left 628 others injured, said the disaster management body said on Friday. In its latest report, the National Disaster Management Authority said 14 people were killed and 17 injured in rain-related incidents in the last 24 hours alone. The overall toll includes 94 men, 46 women and 126 children.

Typhoon Co-may ups Philippines toll

At least 25 have died while 278,000 people have been evacuated just in this week in Philippines as Typhoon Co-may added to the worsening bad weather that brought heavy rains, flash floods and landslides.

People clear the rubble to recover a vehicle following a landslide on a highway in near Chilas district on Wednesday **PHOTO: PTI**

Floods in New Mexico

Yet another afternoon of heavy rainfall triggered flash flooding in the mountain village of Ruidoso on Thursday. Roads were blocked and least five people had to be rescued. Forecasters have been issuing flash-flood warnings as the summer rainy season is in full force. *—PTI*

PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA

Gold falls by ₹500 to ₹99,120/10g

NEW DELHI, 25 JULY

Gold prices extended losses for the second straight day, by declining Rs 500 to Rs 99,120 per 10g in the national capital on Friday, amid easing global trade tensions and dampening the safe-haven demand. According to the All India Sarafa Association, the precious metal of 99.9 per cent purity had finished at Rs 99,620 per 10g on Thursday. At the local markets, gold of 99.5 per cent purity also decreased Rs 500 to Rs 98,750 per 10g (inclusive of all taxes) on Friday as against the previous closing level of Rs 99,250 per 10g. Spot gold fell by USD 20.72 or 0.62 per cent to USD 3,347.94 per ounce in the international markets. —*PTI*

Rupee declines by 12P, settles at 86.52 against USD

MUMBAI, 25 JULY

The rupee declined 12 paise to settle at 86.52 (provisional) against the US dollar on Friday, tracking negative domestic equity markets and surging global crude oil prices. A strengthening American currency overseas and foreign fund outflows further weighed on the local unit, forex traders said. At the interbank foreign exchange, the domestic unit opened at 86.59 and hit the lowest level of 86.63 against the greenback. The unit touched the intra-day peak of 86.47 before ending the session at 86.52 (provisional), registering a loss of 12 paise from its previous closing level. Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, rose 0.33 per cent to 97.44. —*PTI*

VMS TMT gets Sebi nod to float IPO

NEW DELHI, 25 JULY

VMS TMT Ltd, a Gujarat-based manufacturer of Thermo Mechanically Treated (TMT) bars, has received approval from the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) for its Initial Public Offering (IPO). The offer comprises a fresh issue of up to 1.5 crore equity shares. Of the net proceeds, Rs 115 crore will be used to repay debt, with the remainder allocated for general corporate purposes. The company plans to list its shares on both the BSE and NSE. VMS TMT had initially filed for the IPO in September 2024 but withdrew the application in October, re-filing its Draft Red Herring Prospectus on 27 March, 2025. Promoters currently hold a 96.28 per cent stake, with the remainder held by public investors, including Chanakya Opportunities Fund I and Kamdhenu. —*PTI*

Embassy REIT raises ₹2K cr to refinance loans

NEW DELHI, 25 JULY

Embassy Office Parks REIT has raised Rs 2,000 crore through issue of non-convertible debentures (NCDs) to refinance its existing loans and save interest cost. In a regulatory filing on Friday, the company informed that the NCDs have been issued for 10-year tenor. The coupon rate is 7.25 per cent for the first five years and 7.45 per cent for the subsequent five years. The company said it would use the amount to "refinance certain existing debt". More than 15 institutional investors participated in the issue. Embassy REIT is India's first publicly listed Real Estate Investment Trust. It has a total portfolio of 51.1 million sq ft area across 14 office parks in Bengaluru, Mumbai, Pune, Delhi-NCR and Chennai. —*PTI*

Markets fall for 2nd day; IT, oil & gas lose foreign funds

Sensex tumbles by 721.08 points; Nifty slides 225.1 points

MUMBAI, 25 JULY

Stock markets declined for the second day in a row on Friday, with the Sensex tumbling 721 points due to heavy selling in financial, IT and oil & gas shares amid persistent foreign fund outflows.

The 30-share BSE Sensex tanked 721.08 points or 0.88 per cent to settle at over a month's low of 81,463.09. During the day, it plunged 786.48 points or 0.95 per cent to 81,397.69.

The 50-share NSE Nifty dropped 225.10 points or 0.90 per cent to a month's low of 24,837.

Analysts said a weak trend in Asian and European markets also dented investors' sentiment.

Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Investments Limited, said, "Subdued corporate results and lacklustre global cues triggered a broad-based sell-off across domestic equities.

Analysts said a weak trend in Asian and European markets also dented investors' sentiment PHOTO:PTI

Elevated valuations in large-cap stocks, coupled with significant net short positions held by FIIs, added to the downward pressure."

Among Sensex firms, Bajaj Finance declined 4.73 per cent post its June quarter earnings announcement. Power Grid, Infosys, Tech Mahindra, Bajaj Finserv, Trent, Tata Motors, NTPC and Adani Ports were also among the laggards.

However, Sun Pharma and Bharti Airtel emerged as gainers. The BSE smallcap gauge tanked 1.88 per cent and midcap index dropped 1.46 per cent.

Utilities slumped 2.37 per cent, power tumbled 2.36 per cent, oil & gas (2.11 per cent), industrials (1.88 per cent), capital goods (1.83 per cent), IT (1.65 per cent) and metal (1.64 per cent).

BSE healthcare emerged as the only gainer.

As many as 2,892 stocks declined while 1,117 advanved and 145 remained unchanged on the BSE.

On the weekly front, the BSE benchmark gauge declined 294.64 points or 0.36 per cent, and the Nifty dipped 131.4 points or 0.52 per cent.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 2,133.69 crore on Thursday, according to exchange data. However, Domestic Institutional Investors (DIIs) bought stocks worth Rs 2,617.14 crore. —*PTI*

ITC preparing ₹20,000 cr expansion plan: Chairman

KOLKATA, 25 JULY

Diversified conglomerate ITC Ltd plans to invest Rs 20,000 crore across its businesses over the medium term to strengthen manufacturing capabilities and scale emerging growth vectors, Chairman and Managing Director Sanjiv Puri said on Friday.

"Encouraged by the promise of the Indian economy, your company has invested in eight world-class manufacturing facilities in the recent past, with an outlay of nearly Rs 4,500 crore," Puri informed shareholders at the company's Annual General Meeting held virtually. "As we continue to scale new horizons, ITC plans to invest Rs 20,000 crore across businesses in the medium term," Puri said, without providing further details.

He had earlier announced this investment plan during the 2024 AGM speech.

Sanjiv Puri PHOTO:PTI

The investment could span in areas such as FMCG, sustainable packaging and export-oriented value-added agricultural products. As we continue to scale new horizons.

While he did not provide a specific timeline for the proposed capex, Puri said the investment will be directed toward areas aligned with the company's 'ITC Next' strategy, which seeks to build a future-ready portfolio through both organic and inorganic expansion.

He said the company has built 40 state-of-the-art manufacturing assets, enriching ITC's robust ecosystem of 250 dedicated factories and 7,500 MSMEs.

A key pillar of this strategy is ITC's foray into the online food services space through a fast-scaling food-tech platform. The business has already scaled up to 60 cloud kitchens across five cities under four brands — ITC Master Chef Creations, Aashirvaad Soul Creations, Sunfeast Baked Creations, and Sansho by ITC Master Chef.

"This business has registered a CAGR of 108% in the 3 years since inception, setting new benchmarks in culinary innovation and tech-enabled operations, gaining increasing consumer franchise," he said. — *PTI*

CGST Ludhiana unearths ₹260 cr fake billing scam

CHANDIGARH, 25 JULY

Based on specific intelligence, the officers of Central Goods & Services Tax Commissionerate, Ludhiana, conducted multiple search operations at Mandi Gobindgarh unearthing a syndicate involved in availing and passing on fake Input Tax Credit (ITC) in the iron and steel sector using five firms.

CGST Ludhiana conducted multiple search operations at Mandi Gobindgarh in Fatehgarh Sahib district f Punjab. "As per the preliminary assessment, the quantum of bogus bills stands at a staggering Rs 260 crore, resulting in a GST loss of Rs 47 crore to the exchequer," it said.

With the two arrests made so far, the investigation is ongoing to uncover the full extent of the network and identify other entities involved. — *PTI*

EASING RELATIONS

'India open to Chinese electronics investments'

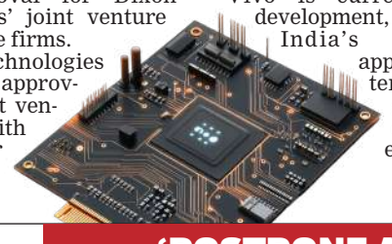
NEW DELHI, 25 JULY

- Approximately 60 per cent of global electronics manufacturing occurs in China, making it challenging to disregard the country completely

India is showing flexibility towards collaboration between domestic firms and Chinese companies, particularly in the electronics sector, according to a government source. The source noted that approximately 60 per cent of global electronics manufacturing occurs in China, making it challenging to disregard the country completely.

"There are emerging signals of easing relations between India and China," the source remarked, pointing to the reopening of tourist visas as a sign of improved ties. This statement comes in response to queries concerning government approval for Dixon Technologies' joint venture with Chinese firms.

Dixon Technologies has secured approval for a joint venture (JV) with Longcheer and is actively pursuing collaborations with Chinese companies. The firm has also established agreements with Chinese component manufacturers like Chongqing Yuhai Precision Manufacturing Co Ltd and Kunshan Q Technology for the production and sale of electronic components.



Moreover, Dixon's JV with Chinese smart device maker Vivo is currently under development, highlighting India's strategic approach to fostering synergies in the electronics ecosystem. —*PTI*

ED files charges against UCO Bank's ex-CMD

NEW DELHI, 25 JULY

A chargesheet has been filed against arrested former UCO bank CMD Subodh Kumar Goel and his family members, and his properties worth Rs 106 crore have been attached under the anti-money laundering, the Enforcement Directorate (ED) said on Friday.

Goel was arrested by the federal probe agency in May from his home in Delhi in an alleged bank loan fraud case of more than Rs 6,200 crore linked to a Kolkata-based TMT bars supplying company named Concast Steel & Power Ltd (CSPL).

He is currently lodged in a Kolkata jail under judicial custody

Movable and immovable assets of Goel worth Rs 106.36 crore were attached as part of a provisional order issued under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) on 9 July, the agency said in a statement. —*PTI*

Intel to cut 24,000 jobs, scale back expansion plans

LONDON, 25 JULY

Intel has announced plans to reduce its workforce by around 24,000 employees, representing approximately a quarter of its total staff, as part of a cost-cutting initiative led by CEO Lip-Bu Tan. The semiconductor firm, which employed 99,500 workers at the close of 2024, aims to end 2025 with just 75,000 employees. This decision follows previous layoffs in Q2, which streamlined management structures and incurred $1.9 billion in restructuring costs.

In a memo to staff, Tan stated, "There are no more blank checks. Every investment must make economic sense." The company's ambitious projects in Germany and Poland, including a £3 billion 'mega-fab' in Germany, have been scrapped, along with the revision of its Ohio chip factory timeline, which is now expected to delay completion until after 2030.

PHOTO: X

- The semiconductor firm, which employed 99,500 workers at the close of 2024, aims to end financial year 2025 with just 75,000 employees

Intel reported a $2.9 billion quarterly loss on $12.9 billion in revenue, marking six consecutive quarters of decline. With a renewed focus on AI chips, Tan aims to slash operating expenses by $17 billion this year while working to regain market share lost to rivals like AMD and Nvidia. – *Agencies*

'POSTPONE AGM MEET'

Rani Kapur seeks explanation for son's 'sudden, suspicious' death

DELHI, 25 JULY

Rani Kapur, former chief of Sona Comstar and widow of industrialist Dr Surinder Kapur, has urged the company's Board to postpone its 29th Annual General Meeting, originally set for 25 July.

In a letter to the Board and shareholders, Kapur cited the recent death of her son, Sunjay Kapur, in London on 12 June, describing it as "sudden and suspicious." She said she remains without formal explanation or documentation regarding the incident.

Kapur, who holds majority ownership in the Sona Group, alleged she was compelled to sign documents during a period of emotional vulnerability, without understanding their contents. She also raised objections to recent Board appointments and claimed others are misrepresenting themselves as her authorised representatives.

Sanjiv Puri with family PHOTO:X/Sunjay Kapur

Calling for a two-week delay, she warned that proceeding without her consent could harm the company and her family's interests. — *ANI*

'GAME CHANGER'

UK FTA will help India, need more pacts: Malhotra

MUMBAI, 25 JULY

Reserve Bank Governor Sanjay Malhotra on Friday welcomed the signing of the free trade agreement with the UK, saying it will help multiple sectors of the Indian economy.

Speaking at the FE Modern BFSI Summit here, Malhotra said, "Hopefully it should help us... that is the way going forward now, because unfortunately multilateralism seems to have taken a back seat," Malhotra said in the central bank's first comments on the trade deal.

The country needs more such pacts with countries, he said and added that negotiations with the US are in "advanced stages".

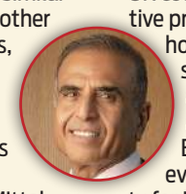
Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal called the India-UK FTA a game changer in trade, investment and services sectors.

He said it was "remarkable" that a journey which started over two decades ago culminated in a very "fair, equitable and balanced agreement". —*PTI*

No carbon tax relief in FTA, says GTRI

The UK government in December 2023 decided to implement its Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism starting 2027. By not securing an exemption clause on it, India lost a chance to protect its carbon-intensive exports, GTRI Founder Ajay Srivastava said. "From January 2027, the UK can impose carbon taxes on Indian steel and aluminum," he said. —*PTI*

FTA a valuable template for trade talks, says Sunil Mittal



The landmark India-UK Free Trade Agreement (FTA) can serve as a potential template for India's pursuit of similar trade pacts with other nations and blocs, including the European Union, according to Bharti Enterprises Founder and Chairman Sunil Mittal. Mittal said there are many similarities between the UK and Western European markets and suggested that the strategies used for the UK deal could guide in discussions with the 27-nation bloc. Mittal believes that the successful agreement with the UK could place constructive pressure on EU stakeholders to resolve some outstanding and pending issues, as he highlighted EU's scale as an even larger opportunity for Indian exports. The top honcho traced the arc of India's recent trade outreach, citing FTAs with Australia, the UAE, the four-nation European bloc EFTA, and others. —*PTI*

Indian-origin Alphabet CEO Pichai enters the billionaires club

BENGALURU, 25 JULY

Indian-origin CEO of Alphabet, Sundar Pichai, on Thursday became a billionaire.

The milestone comes after Alphabet's market value soared by over $1 trillion since early 2023, delivering a solid 120 per cent returns to the investors.

As the tech giant's shares closed at an all-time high as its market value increased by over $1 trillion, the Alphabet's CEO's net worth touched $1.1 billion according to the Bloomberg Billionaires Index.

Sundar Pichai, 53, has been the CEO of Alphabet for a decade now, making him the longest-serving CEO of Alphabet by August 2025.

Usually billionaires in the tech industry are company founders. In this context, what makes Pichai's feat even more special is the fact that he is one of the rare non-founding CEOs, even more in the tech industry, to become a billionaire.

The Indian-origin man initially joined Google as the head of product management and development.

He rose through the ranks to eventually become the CEO of Google in 2015 and Alphabet's in 2019 after Google became the latter's subsidiary.

In the 10 years at Alphabet's helm, the giant has expanded, turning divisions like You Tube, Cloud and Play into billion-dollar engines. — *Agencies*

FIDE Women's WC to have Indian winner for the first time

Grandmaster Humpy

BATUMI, 25 JULY

In a first for Indian chess, the FIDE Women's World Cup will have a winner from the country, with Koneru Humpy and Divya Deshmukh set to fight it out in what could be anybody's game in the grand finale here on Saturday.

It's the first in the event's history that two Indians are facing each other in the final. Both Humpy and Deshmukh have qualified for the Women's candidates' tournament next year after reaching the final here. At the same time, Deshmukh defeated former world champion Zhongyi Tan -- also of China -- in the second game of the last-four stage match. Grandmaster Humpy, 38, was the winner of the world women's rapid tournament and also tied for first at the women's grand prix in recent times, and she has proved yet again that age is just a number. Her grit and determination have not faded one bit in the past many years.

"It's one of the happiest moments for chess fans because now the title will go to India for sure. But of course, as a player, tomorrow will be quite a tough game as well -- Divya has played tremendously well in this whole tournament," Humpy told the FIDE website. At half the age of Humpy, International Master Deshmukh has already stunned as many as three players ranked in the top ten in the event. Her first victim was second seed Jiner Zhu of China, before ousting D Harika. The 19-year-old Nagpur-based Deshmukh then beat former women's world champion Zhongyi Tan of China in the semifinals.

"I just need some sleep and some food; these days have been so anxious for me," Deshmukh said after entering the final. "I think I could have played much better. I was winning at a certain point, and then it got complicated. I think I messed up in the middlegame and that I should have had a much smoother win," she said about her semifinal match.

Andhra CM congratulates Koneru Humpy

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu on Friday congratulated grandmaster Koneru Humpy for reaching the FIDE women's chess world cup final. The chief minister noted that her determination and brilliance are commendable.

"Congratulations to Indian chess grandmaster Koneru Humpy for reaching the FIDE Women's Chess World Cup final," said Naidu in a post on X. *—PTI*

Tanvi and Vennala enter Badminton Asia Juniors SFs

SOLO (INDONESIA), 25 JULY

India's young shuttlers Tanvi Sharma and Vennala Kalagotla continued their impressive run at the Badminton Asia Juniors Individual Championships, advancing to the semifinals here on Friday. Second seed Tanvi maintained her dominant form in the women's singles, defeating fifth seed Thalita Ramadhani Wiryawan of Indonesia 21-19, 21-14 in a swift 35-minute match. Tanvi has been in sublime touch throughout the tournament, securing all her wins in straight games so far. Joining her in the last four is Vennala, who braved a strong challenge from Thailand's Janyaporn Meepanthong in a gripping 58-minute contest. Vennala took the opening game 21-18 with some sharp rallies, but Janyaporn fought back to bag the second 21-17, forcing the match into a decider.*—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Pakistan recall Shaheen Afridi for T20Is in WI

LAHORE, 25 JULY

The Pakistani selectors on Friday recalled fast bowler Shaheen Shah Afridi for the upcoming T20 series in the West Indies while retaining Mohammad Rizwan as the captain for the One-Day Internationals in the Caribbean. Left-arm pacer Shaheen, who was sidelined in the last few T20 series, has been recalled in the format, while fast bowlers Hasan Ali and Haris Rauf, who missed the recent series in Bangladesh, also came back into the team. The selectors have also retained top batsman Babar Azam for the three ODIs. The T20s are scheduled from July 31 to August 3 in Florida, followed by the ODIs in Trinidad. *—PTI*

Dev Kumar Meena betters own pole vault

BOCHUM, 25 JULY

Dev Kumar Meena bettered his pole vault national record with an effort of 5.40m to qualify for the final round at the World University Games here on Friday. The 20-year-old Meena finished fifth in the Group A qualification round and sixth overall as he bettered his earlier national record of 5.35m set in April in Kochi during the Federation Cup by 0.05m. He began at 5.05m, which he cleared in his first attempt, before also soaring above 5.25m in his first try. He faltered in his first attempt when the bar was raised to 5.40m, but successfully cleared the national record height in his second attempt.*—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

UP Warriorz appoint Nayar as head coach

MUMBAI, 25 JULY

Former India assistant coach Abhishek Nayar was on Friday named as the head coach of the Women's Premier League (WPL) franchise UP Warriorz ahead of the fourth season of the competition.Nayar, who was removed as the Indian men's team assistant coach recently, less than a year into the job, joins UPW after the franchise parted ways with Jon Lewis, who had been in charge of the team for the last three seasons.This isn't Nayar's first association with the Warriorz, as he also helped them during the team's off-season training camps in Bengaluru after the first edition of the league.*—PTI*

Joe equals Sangakkara with 38th Test 100

Climbing to 3rd on the all-time list of Test scorers

NEW DELHI, 25 JULY

Joe Root racked up his 38th hundred as England extended their dominance over India on Friday.

Washington Sundar got the ball to drift and got rid of Ollie Pope (71) and Harry Brook after lunch, providing a much-needed relief for India after a wicketless morning session.

Root (129 batting off 214), however, continued to pile on the runs and reached three figures with a four down the leg side off Anshul Kamboj, laying the foundation for the hosts' 75-run lead.

Minutes later, he also surpassed Ricky Ponting to become the second-highest run-scorer in Tests, leaving him only behind Sachin Tendulkar, who amassed 15921 runs.

Joe Root racked up his 38th hundred
PHOTO: PTI

India employed spinners Washington and Ravindra Jadeja from both ends despite taking the new ball.

The move worked as Sundar had Pope caught at first slip before having Brook stumped as he could not connect on the charge.

Root equalled Sri Lankan wicketkeeper-batter Kumar Sangakkara's record. He's now the joint fourth in the list of most Test centuries. He is four short of overtaking Ricky Ponting at the third spot. *—PTI*

CHINA OPEN

Satwik-Chirag breeze into semis, Unnati bows out

CHANGZHOU, 25 JULY

Premier Indian men's doubles pair of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty booked their spot in the semifinals, but rising badminton star Unnati Hooda's dream run ended at the China Open Super 1000 here on Friday.

The reigning Asian Games champions picked a comfortable 21-18, 21-14 win over familiar foes Ong Yew Sin and Teo Ee Yi of Malaysia in 40 minutes.

The win improved Satwik-Chirag's head-to-head record against the Malaysians to 7-3. They will take on the world number two pair of Aaron Chia-Soh Wooi Yik of Malaysia in the last four stage. Hooda, on the other hand, lost to world number 4 Akane Yamaguchi of Japan 16-21, 12-21 in the women's singles quarterfinal that lasted 33 minutes. The 17-year-old had scripted her biggest career win against 'idol' and two-time Olympic medallist PV Sindhu. With Hooda's exit, India's singles campaign in the tournament came to an end.

Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty in action at the China Open
PHOTO: PTI

In the opening game, Hooda kept pace with Yamaguchi early on but failed to sustain the momentum, with the Japanese star reeling off five consecutive points at one stage to take it 21-16.

The second game followed a similar script. Despite a brief fightback where she won four straight points, Hooda fell behind as Yamaguchi strung together six consecutive points and wrapped up the second game 21-12. *—PTI*

India women's team batter Veda retires

NEW DELHI, 25 JULY

India batter Veda Krishnamurthy on Friday announced her retirement from international cricket but hinted that she will continue to be associated with the sport in some other role.

Krishnamurthy played 48 ODIs and 76 T20Is, collecting 829 and 875 runs respectively.

"From a small-town girl with big dreams to wearing the India jersey with pride. Grateful for everything cricket gave me: the lessons, the people, the memories. It's time to say goodbye to playing, but not to the game. Always for India. Always for the team," she said in a social media post.

The 32-year-old, married to former Karnataka cricketer Arjun Hoysala, last played for the country during a women's T20I match against Australia at Melbourne in 2020. Her last one-day international was in 2018.

Known for her hard-hitting with the bat, Krishnamurthy's last competitive game was for Gujarat Giants against Royal Challengers Bengaluru in last year's Women's Premier League. *—PTI*

DC OPEN

Ben Shelton defeats Diallo, sets up match with Francis Tiafoe

WASHINGTON, 25 JULY

Ben Shelton defeated Gabriel Diallo in the third round of play (Round of 16) at the Mubadala Citi DC Open in Washington, D.C., 6-3, 6-2 on Friday.

Shelton outmatched Diallo with his serve, tallying 16 aces on a day when he had 46 total serve opportunities (first or second). He reached 146 mph while averaging 133 mph on his first serve. Shelton also made the most of the opportunities he was given, converting three of four break points. At the same time, Shelton prevented Diallo from ever reaching a break point. Total dominance. In the quarter-final on Friday, Shelton will face off with one of the players he knows best on the ATP Tour, fellow American Francis Tiafoe.

Venus bows out, Pegula stunned at DC Open

Venus' return to tennis came to an abrupt end in the last 16 of the ATP/WTA DC Open on Thursday, with the veteran American losing to Poland's Magdalena Frech in straight sets. The 45-year-old seven-timeGrand Slam singles champion, playing this week for the first time in 16 months, had become the oldest woman to win a WTA match in more than two decades with Tuesday's first-round win over Peyton Stearns.

But Williams found the going harder against fifth seed Frech in Thursday's third round clash, losing 6-2. *—PTI*

RCB pacer Yash Dayal accused of raping a minor

JAIPUR, 25 JULY

IPL side Royal Challengers Bengaluru's under-fire pacer Yash Dayal has been accused of raping a minor in an FIR registered against him by Jaipur Police.

The 27-year-old cricketer from Uttar Pradesh is already facing charges of sexual exploitation from a woman in Ghaziabad who has alleged that Dayal abused her after promising to marry her during a five-year relationship.

SHO of Jaipur's Sanganer Sadar police station, Anil Jaiman, said that the latest FIR was registered on Wednesday.

"FIR was registered against Yash Dayal for rape under relevant sections of POCSO (Protection of Children from Sexual Offences) Act and the BNS (Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita)," he said here on Friday.

According to Jaiman, the victim has alleged that the player raped her in 2023 when she was 17, and a similar assault took place in April this year at a hotel in the Sitapura area.*—PTI*

IRL to have a new team from B'luru from 2025 season

BENGALURU, 25 JULY

Yes, the Indian Racing League (IRL) will indeed feature a new team from Bengaluru in the 2025 season.

The team, named "Kichcha's Kings Bengaluru," is owned by Kannada superstar Sudeep and his wife Priya Sudeep.

This addition will be part of the league's fourth season, which is scheduled to begin with the Kari Motor Speedway hosting the opening round from 15-17 August in Coimbatore. *—PTI*

Anahat signs off with a bronze medal

CAIRO, 25 JULY

Teen squash sensation Anahat Singh signed off with a bronze medal from the World Squash Junior Championships after going down to Egypt's Nadien ElHammamy in the women's semifinals here Friday.

The second-seeded Indian fought hard but eventually lost 6-11, 12-14, 10-12 to the Egyptian, who had strong support from the home crowd.

Anahat led in both the second and third games but couldn't build on the advantage.

With her semifinal finish, the 17-year-old became the first Indian girl to reach the last-four stage of the tournament since Dipika Pallikal in 2010.

Had she won, Anahat would have become only the second Indian to reach the final in the women's category after Joshna Chinappa's historic run in 2005. *—PTI*

Parneet, Dalal win mixed compound gold

RHINE-RUHR, 25 JULY

India's Parneet Kaur and Kushal Dalal held their nerves in a thrilling finish to beat South Korea's Yerin Park and Seunghyun Park and clinch the mixed compound archery gold medal at the World University Games, here on Friday. Parneet and Dalal's triumph also gave India its first gold at the event, adding to two other medals won in archery team events earlier in the day. Both archers had to deal with disappointment as Dalal settled for a silver in the men's team event, while the Asian Games team gold medallist

Parneet returned with a bronze in the women's team event. The duo showed remarkable character and composure in the mixed pair event to bounce back and overturn a one-point deficit at the halfway mark, nailing eight perfect arrows including one 'X' (closer to the centre) across the final two ends to seal a 157-154 win.*—PTI*

DAVIS CUP

Sumit Nagal returns to fold after two years

NEW DELHI, 25 JULY

India's top singles player, Sumit Nagal, on Friday returned to the Davis Cup squad after a two-year absence, while number one doubles player Yuki Bhambri also made a comeback to the national fold after missing two ties as the AITA selection panel picked an eight-member squad for the away match against Switzerland.

India will travel to the city of Biel for the World Group I first-round tie, which will be played on indoor courts from September 12.Nagal's last appearance was the home tie against Morocco in Lucknow in September 2023, where he won both his singles matches in India's 4-1 win.

He did not travel to Pakistan for the historic tie in February 2024 and also missed the subsequent matches against Sweden and Togo.

Nagal has dropped outside the top-300 bracket due to a lack of form and unfavourable results this season. A semifinal finish at the Trieste Challenger in Italy this month has been his best showing this season. Apart from Nagal (ranked 306), India chose singles players in Karan Singh (403) and young Aryan Shah (442). Sasikumar Mukund (463) and talented Dakshineshwar Suresh (790) will be the reserve singles players for the tie.

Top-ranked Bhambri (ranked 35) and N Sriram Balaji (75) are the doubles players chosen in the squad, which will have Rithvik Bollipalli (77) as reserve. Bhambri had travelled to Pakistan and contributed to the team's 4-0 win against the hosts in Islamabad, but has not featured in the national team since then. The tie will be played on the indoor courts, which are likely to be fast. Nagal's game is best suited for slower courts."Sumit had a great journey to the top-100. *—PTI*

World C'ships: Lovlina, Nikhat Zareen return to Indian squad

NEW DELHI, 25 JULY

Star boxers Nikhat Zareen and Lovlina Borgohain were on Thursday named in India's squad for the World Championships set to take place in Liverpool in September.

The 20-member squad was finalised after the boxers went through a week-long assessment at the National Institute of Sports (NIS), Patiala.

The tournament, to be held from September 4 to 14, will be the first World Championships held under the aegis of the new governing body of the sport, World Boxing.

It will feature competitions in 10 weight classes for men and women. It will also be for the first time that male and female boxers will compete in an Olympics-style boxing at the same event for the title of World Boxing Champion.

Both Zareen and Borgohain had missed the women's nationals in March.

While the two-time world champion Zareen was injured at the time, the Tokyo Olympic bronze medallist Borgohain had missed the event as the Assam state unit refused to send her due to infighting in the federation.*—PTI*